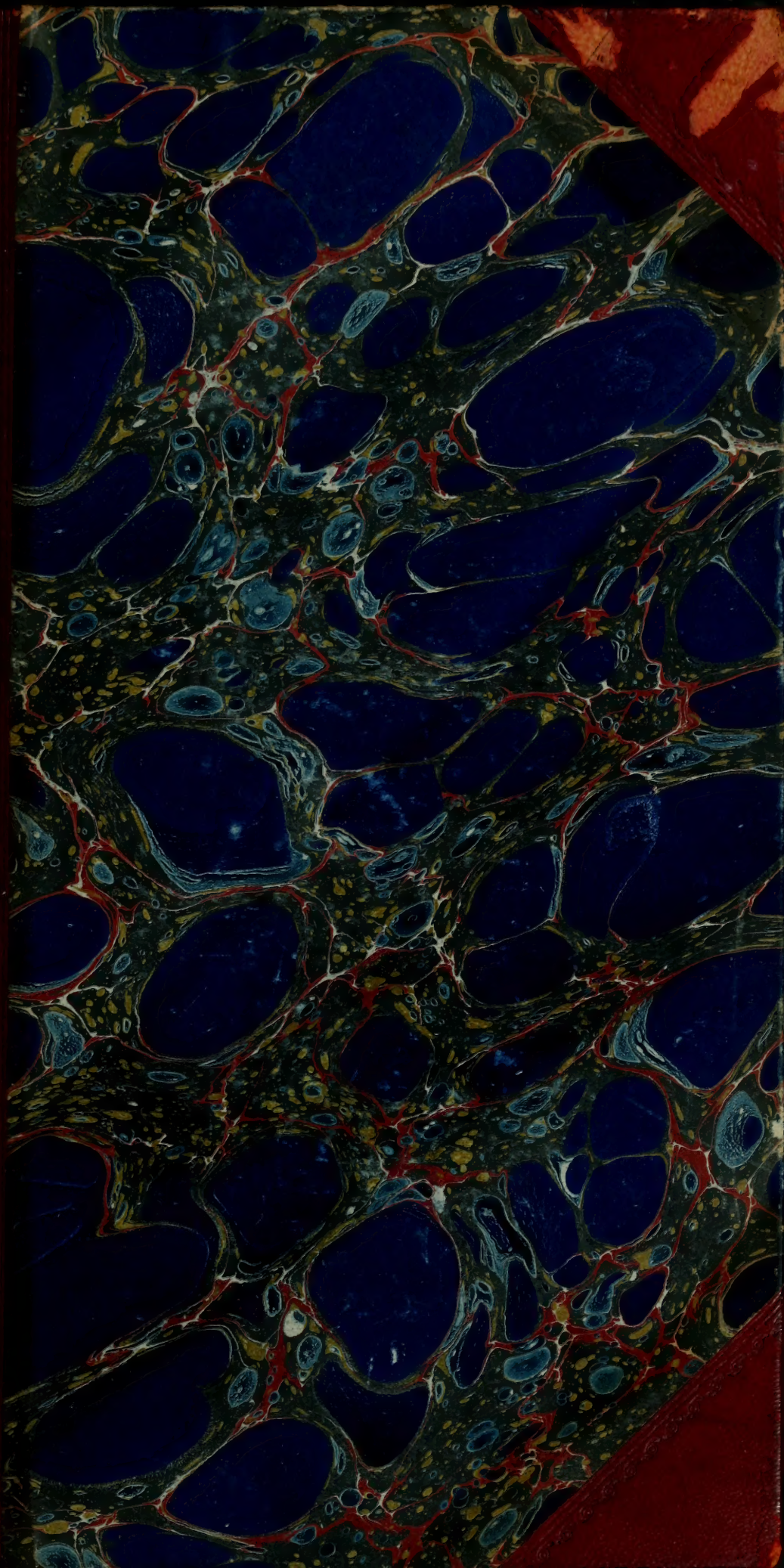
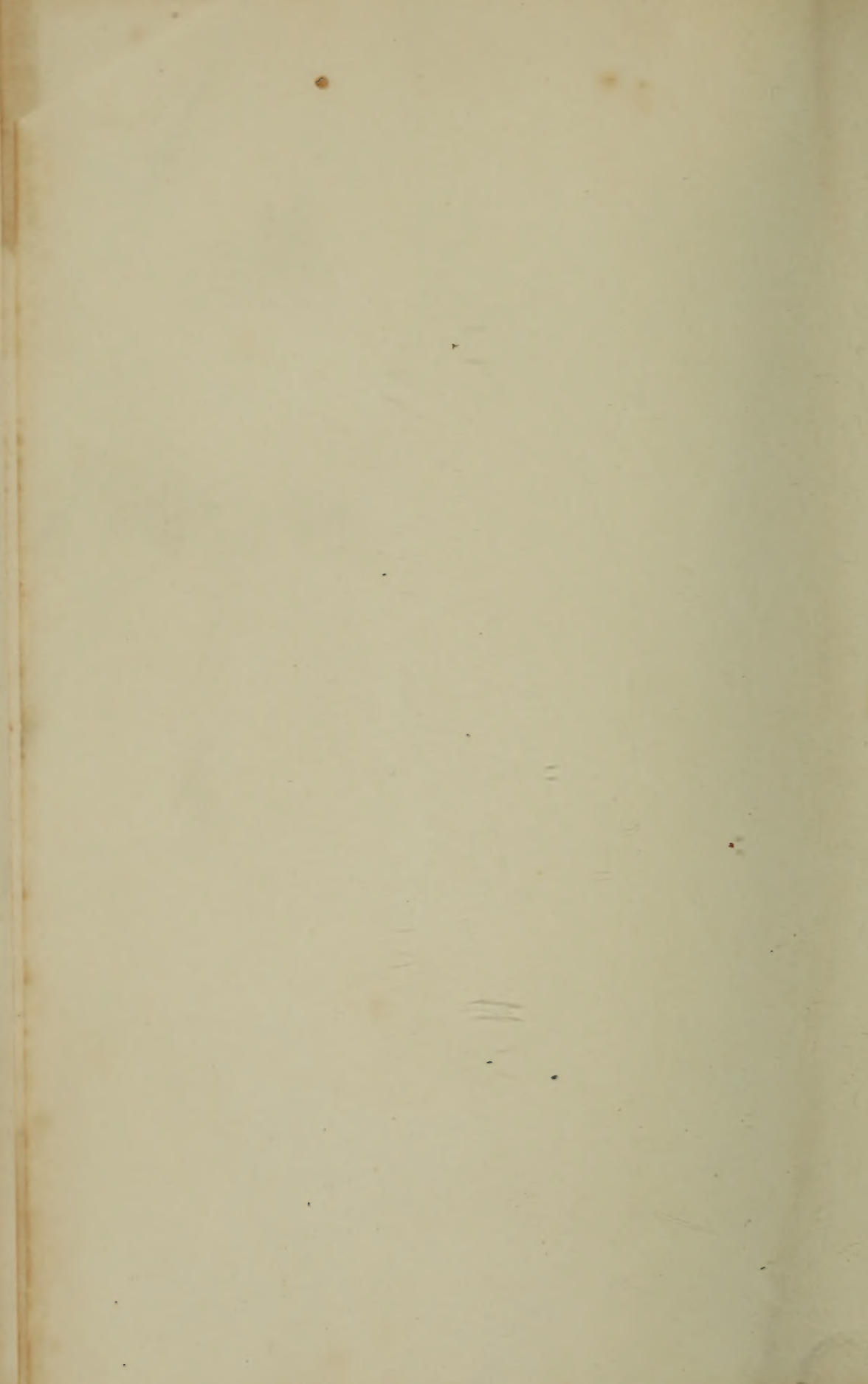


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M. ELIEN EDWARDS.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

JUSTINE'S DIPLOMACY.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE
ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXVIII.

July to December, 1879.

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THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER XIX.

“HIS FINGERS HELD THE PEN.”

“**I** THINK we shall make something of that young fellow in time,” said Mr. Bourne.

Breakfast, under Mr. Bourne's sceptre in his own home, was not quite the easy-going meal that we have described at Comber Court. At Sir Marcus Combermere's he could conform with a good grace, and overlook breaches of discipline with no worse comment than a half-suppressed growl: but at No. 23, Camelford Square, rules were laid down to be kept, not broken; and half-past eight was the latest moment at which any correct-minded person could, or should, expect to receive a welcome at the board. Against this law Miss Wilmot rebelled as much as she thought worth while; yielding so far to necessity that she just kept within the letter of the statute, but protesting by word and look, that it might be plain to everybody that it was an iniquitous law, and ought to be repealed. It was her own doing, nevertheless, that she had to endure it. Other invitations had been sent by friends and connections, among whom she was generally popular; but when Mr. Bourne said to her, “I hope, my dear, you mean to stay with us for the present,” she acquiesced with a readiness that rather took him by surprise.

She was not the only visitor who had yielded, on small solicitation, a willing consent to taste his hospitality. Miss Medlicott, after accompanying her friends to London, proposed retiring to a small lodging she had heard of, not particularly salubrious in situation or luxurious as to furniture, but quite good enough for her, who required so little.

Mrs. Bourne, with tears in her eyes, begged her to give them a few days first, that she might recruit after her journey; and the few days were now rapidly becoming many. Mr. Bourne had begun to growl privately about that good thing of which it is possible to have too much; but his wife always stopped his mouth with the piteous question: What was the poor dear to do—when, as she confessed, there was no roof under which she slept so well as theirs? she who hardly slept at all, as a rule.

Be it observed that, as an invalid, Miss Medlicott might have been exempted from the rule above mentioned, and allowed to breakfast in her own room. But, after trying the experiment once, she decided that it was her duty to make the exertion; and she always appeared the moment the hot dishes were placed on the table.

There was no discoverable reason for this time-honoured regulation, as Mr. Bourne had a good staff at his counting-house, and seldom left home before ten. But he liked to take his breakfast leisurely, read his newspaper and letters, hear some of his wife's correspondence, and settle what she was to do in the course of the day; and it was a point of loyalty in Camelford Square for the ladies to defer all morning occupations or engagements till the master of the house had departed for the city.

On the occasion of which we are speaking, he had been unusually reticent during the meal and the interval of study that followed it. It was only while putting on his great coat, assisted by his wife, that he suddenly gave utterance to the opinion already quoted.

"I think we shall make something of that young fellow in time."

Cecilia, who had been dutifully holding his hat, in the secret hope that he might put it on a little sooner for seeing it ready, was so taken by surprise that she let it fall, to the great consternation of Mrs. Bourne, and rather to his own amusement.

"I say, my dear, that won't do," he said, drily. "You may play with our hearts as much as you please, but be good enough to respect our wardrobes."

"I respect everything belonging to you, sir," said Cecilia. "Especially your opinion—and your good nature."

"When they go together, I presume. There, my love, that will do," as his wife was diligently smoothing his ill-used head-gear. "I do not wish to be late, and set a bad example to young beginners."

"Oh, you mean young Mr. Archdale," exclaimed Mrs. Bourne. "You are pleased with him, I see—I am so glad. I was always sure—his mother is so anxious—I knew he would be a comfort."

"You knew more than I did, then, for I was not sure at all; and with a mother who has sometimes been so self-willed and foolish, it was an experiment at the best. I see he is in earnest, and Wing gives him a high character; so, as I said, I think we shall make something of him in time."

"Poor dear young man! It must be a great trial—I don't mean

being with you, love—but sitting all day at a desk—and the air of the city so close ! I wonder if he gets out regularly for his luncheon ? I should like to ask him here, Nicholas.”

“Very good, my dear ; ask him to dinner. That is the only time you will find him disengaged. Ask him for to-morrow, while his mother is out of town. He told me yesterday she was gone to see his grandmother, who is unwell. I thought he looked rather dull, being, as I daresay he is, all alone.”

“Poor fellow !” ejaculated kind Mrs. Bourne.

Nothing more was said. Her husband departed. And it is very probable she might have forgotten all about the invitation, but Cecilia took care to remind her of it.

Cecilia did more. She came to her hostess’s relief when in the agonies of composition—a note being one of those works of art which cost Mrs. Bourne a stupendous effort—and blandly asked if she had noticed how little breakfast poor Miss Medicott had eaten that morning. Would not a drive before luncheon do her good ? Mrs. Bourne had not thought of it, but it was most kind of the dear girl to propose it—by all means, they would go—but oh ! this note—it would never be in time.

“Never mind writing at all, Mrs. Bourne ; we can save you all that trouble, and have a pleasant morning besides. You have often promised me a day’s shopping in the city, at your own pet establishments, where everything is so cheap and good ; and we may just as well call at the counting-house—which I am very curious to see. You can then invite Mr. Archdale and receive his answer. And if we are late for luncheon, and Miss Medicott requires support, you can treat us to some turtle soup, which she is very fond of.”

“So I will, to be sure, and anything else she fancies. Poor dear, it is sad to see her. I am very much obliged to you, Cecilia. Mr. Bourne was saying last night—in strict confidence, you know—that you were quite like our own child, and if he approved your choice—but there, I am making you blush, and betraying his secrets.”

“Dear, kind Mrs. Bourne, whose approval have I to look to but yours and his ? What should I do without my best friends ?”

“I don’t know, indeed, my love—I don’t know how anybody manages without Mr. Bourne’s advice. If only people knew half he knows—but dear me, if you do not ring and order the carriage, we shall never get out at all.”

And so it befel that the monotony of the day’s work in the counting-house of Bourne and Son was unexpectedly enlivened. Mr. Wing, the manager, upon being summoned to the door, returned to say it was Mr. Archdale who was wanted.

It had not been without an amount of pain, much harder to bear than lameness or loss of strength, that the young soldier renounced his favourite profession. In the days of which we speak, commissions were still bought and sold ; and while the necessary arrangements

were being made by the army agents, Ernest stifled the last pangs of disappointment by devoting himself to the study of his new calling. He was to work for the first month without salary, simply as a learner; and though every consideration was shown him, by Mr. Bourne's orders, and it was arranged that he should neither be overtasked nor exposed to cold or fatigue—still there was no escaping a sufficient amount of drudgery and dull routine, that might have daunted a less resolute spirit. The temptation to throw it all over in disgust and despair, did certainly present itself over and over again, but was never allowed to prevail. He held on, as if he had been ordered to do so; and did not even grumble to his mother, by way of relief. Whatever might be the secret motive that buoyed him up, the courage, with which he bore the rather severe change from invalid habits, had some recompense in a slow revival of strength, and, as its natural consequence, of cheerfulness. He perceived already that some of his mother's indulgent precautions might profitably be laid aside; and the hope of dispensing with more in time helped him through many an ache and twinge which would once have driven him to the sofa.

His colleagues in the counting-house, who were a little shy of him at first, soon began to like, and then to admire him. His dress, his style, his manners, became the glass of fashion in the small world swayed by Bourne and Son; the younger men were won by his good-nature, as the elder were by his respectful attention to orders. And Mr. Wing, who had suffered enough from the unruly and inattentive in his day, pronounced him to be a punctual and useful young man—a tribute which bore more value than he was aware. Mr. Bourne, on principle, took but slight notice of him at first, judging, not unwisely, that he had better make his own way like the rest; but the commendations that reached his ear pleased him. Especially as they redounded to his own credit, in having discerned that there was good stuff in the young fellow, in spite of his mother's nonsense. And when he deigned to deliver himself of the oracular sentence already recorded, his wife knew that Ernest's merits were an accepted fact. She might pet him now as much as she pleased.

How much petting he would be willing to accept was another matter. When he heard Mr. Wing's summons, his heart gave an insane leap: it crossed his brain that business might have brought his friends from the north to London, and that Adela Granard might be in the carriage. There was an eager brightness in his face as he came out of the office, grasping his trusty cane rather than leaning upon it: a brightness which was very pleasant to two of the ladies—Mrs. Bourne attributing it to the happiness of working under dear Nicholas, and Cecilia to the surprise of seeing her there. The invitation to dinner being duly accepted, Mrs. Bourne proceeded to enquiries about his health, his recreation, his meals; and stimulated by Cecilia's smiles of approval, suggested that he should accompany them at once

to have some turtle soup at Rodd's. He was beginning to object, on account of being wanted ; but Mrs. Bourne knew her power, and was not to be contradicted. At the door of that counting-house her foot was on her own native heath, and her name (so to speak) was Mac-Gregor ; and he was cut short with an imperative "Nonsense, nonsense ! young men can always be spared when they are wanted to go anywhere. Let me speak to Mr. Wing—oh, there he is. You can spare Mr. Archdale for an hour, can't you, my dear sir ? We want him most particularly, and his health requires—my dear Mr. Archdale, get your hat and your great coat directly. Thank you, Mr. Wing ; young people are very obstinate sometimes. I hope Mrs. Wing will be well enough to fancy a few choice candied fruits : I have received some from abroad, and shall send a small basket to your house to-morrow. And how is my little godson going on ? Oh, that is right, Mr. Archdale ! Now Thomas, to Rodd's."

And triumphant in the plenitude of power, Mrs. Bourne carried off her guest—Mr. Wing, having an invalid wife and a large family, owing too much to her goodwill and patronage to thwart her in any matter left to his own discretion.

The instant Ernest perceived his mistake, he felt he ought not to have made it ; but it was not in his nature to repel what was so kindly meant. The change was agreeable, at any rate ; and in talking about absent friends and Comber Court there was a chance of hearing something of Adela : though he could not bring himself to mention her by name. He was more like himself, Cecilia thought, than she had seen him yet ; and her own spirits rising in proportion, the time flew with unwelcome rapidity. The luncheon at Rodd's was a great success—even Mrs. Bourne being satisfied that Miss Medlicott did it justice ; and she was charmed to find how much Ernest knew of the city already. In fact, ever since he had cast in his lot with it, he had been devouring every book that could give him information on the subject, and studying the metropolis of his own country as if it had been Paris or Rome.

Mrs. Bourne, whose early married life had been passed under the shadow of St. Paul's, and who had never cared for any other locality, rejoiced more and more in her husband's excellent judgment, and smiled on the two young people as if she would fain have mapped out their destiny, as worthy successors of Nicholas and herself. And her benevolent face being apt to reveal her thoughts, perhaps Ernest read them—as plainly as Cecilia did ; for he began to look at his watch, and speak of returning to his work. Mrs. Bourne said he must accompany them to Mudie's—the selection of new books for her husband being one of the burdens she was always glad to put on somebody else. The carriage was proceeding at a sober pace along Holborn, when Cecilia made a sudden exclamation.

"There is Archdeacon Burleigh !"

There was no mistaking the venerable gentleman ; but he had

passed on before they could greet him, and Mrs. Bourne declared her husband would be very angry if she did not ask him to dinner. So the coachman was desired to follow him, and pull up wherever he stopped; which he presently did at a chemist's shop, into which Mr. Burleigh had just entered. Unluckily, one of the horses, not many weeks in Mr. Bourne's stables, became restive, and backed and fidgeted rather more than was agreeable in a crowded street. With a little patience the inconvenience might have been trifling; but Miss Medlicott began to scream. She protested she must get out that instant—they must all get out—she might be very wrong, very foolish, but she could not help it; her nerves were her misfortune, and always would be. And the instant the door was opened she would have jumped upon the pavement had not Ernest been beforehand with her, and sprung down in time to give her his arm, so that she alighted safely. The others followed, as a matter of course, and in the slight confusion of entering the shop, and explaining matters to the surprised Archdeacon, it was not observed that Ernest had sunk into a seat, gasping from intensity of pain. He had wrenched his injured limb in the hurried descent from the carriage, and the drops of agony were already standing on his brow, though he tried to assure the frightened ladies that it was nothing, and they had better drive home at once. He should be all right in a few minutes, and should go back in a cab. This Cecilia stoutly resisted at first, but the Archdeacon took Ernest's view of the matter, and talked over Mrs. Bourne into agreeing with him, promising her that he would see after the invalid, and take care he came to no more harm.

"We shall have it all in the papers if the penny-a-liners get hold of it," he said. "Your husband will not much like that."

The bare notion terrified Mrs. Bourne. She hurried Miss Medlicott, for whom a civil assistant in green spectacles uncorked a bottle of seltzer water, and spoke rather sharply to Miss Wilmot, when the latter would have lingered to ascertain if the hurt was serious: the horse was quiet now, and they must make haste home before worse happened. And with a parting entreaty to the Archdeacon to dine with them the next day, which he would not quite promise to do, she drove away as if the whole staff of reporters had been on her track, only to be escaped by diligent speed.

"It is an ill wind that blows nobody good," said the Archdeacon to his young friend. "I wanted to see you, but did not expect to have you tumbling into my arms in this way. What is amiss? What can be done for you?"

The spectacled assistant had drawn near; and, before Ernest could answer, he made a quiet remark in technical language, with which the young man's experience had made him familiar. He looked up with more confidence, and it was not difficult to persuade him to put himself into the professional hands that evidently knew what to do. The result justified his trust, for the pain subsided, and he lay down on a

hard sofa in the surgery behind the shop with a sense of relief that was almost luxurious.

The medical adviser suggested sleep, advice which the Archdeacon vehemently supported. The latter then began upon a subject that would have driven sleep from Ernest's eyes had it been midnight.

"Now you have done with this gentleman, sir," said the Archdeacon to the assistant, "perhaps you can attend to my business. I have some enquiries to make about 'X. L.,' who gives your establishment as his address."

The assistant bowed, took out an account book, and turned to a particular page.

"'X. L.' Letters received on payment of five shillings. Quite correct, sir."

"Quite correct according to his notions, I daresay; but doubtful according to mine. Can I deal with the principal, or only through your private postal delivery?"

"The principal, as you call him, sir, is abroad at present. Any communications will be punctually forwarded."

"On moderate terms, according to anonymous correspondent. Well, sir, Miss Granard has empowered me to act in her name, as the sole guardian of Miss Stormount, and her answer to the letter is that any claims on the estate must be laid before the executor of Mrs. Dangerfield's will. There can be no mystery or difficulty about a straightforward matter such as that."

"It is an answer easily given, sir, no doubt. It may not be so easy to act upon."

"Probably not: one who begins with anonymous letters and obscure threats may find plain-dealing difficult. Such as it is, receive it as final; and allow me to pay the required fee once for all."

He laid five shillings on the table. The spectacled assistant declined them.

"It was necessary to protect ourselves against annoyance," he said, gravely; "but the honour of a visit from Archdeacon Burleigh requires no other payment."

"So! You know me, do you? And you are pleased to call my visit an honour! When and where did we meet?"

"Oh, sir, men like yourself are known to many of whom they never hear. Excuse me if I leave you while the sick gentleman is resting. I have some dispensing to attend to which cannot be deferred."

He bowed and left them, closing the door behind him. The Archdeacon gave one of his snorts, expressive of doubt and dissatisfaction.

"He carries it off with great dignity, but I am not going to touch his half-crowns, for all that. I say, Archdale, what are you getting up for?"

"I want to know what you have been talking about."

The explanation was soon given, the Archdeacon producing

Ernest's own note, and adding that he should have looked him up that afternoon if they had not met.

"I am going across the water, to ferret out what I can, and I may find your Jack-in-the-box, that Paul, in whom you seem to believe with a loyalty worthy of a better cause. I cannot get out of my head the fact that Emily was made cognisant of what her mother wrote—and that it was Paul who urged their leaving Comber Court."

"I know it all," said Archdale: "but I am convinced the boy is innocent, and that his absence is part of that Professor's revenge. Come, Archdeacon, I must really be going, if that civil dispenser will send for a hansom."

The Archdeacon would not trouble the dispenser again, but went to call the cab himself. It gave Ernest the opportunity of thanking his spectacled attendant, and of slipping a handsome fee into his hand—which he made no difficulty about accepting.

"I must beg you will take this phial home with you, and use it according to the directions," he said, with more professional authority in his tone than his appearance seemed to warrant. "And at any time that you think I could give you relief, drop a line here to Mr. Oates, the dispenser, and if I am in town, I will wait upon you with pleasure. Perhaps you will leave me your card."

To this Ernest willingly assented; and, again thanking him for his attention, limped to the door where the cab was waiting, to be driven back to the counting-house.

The Archdeacon helped him to his seat, and then strode off in another direction, without taking any further notice of the dispenser. The spectacles watched him till he disappeared.

"Well, my dears!" began Mr. Bourne, when he got home, "you have done a clever thing among you. It will be weeks now before that poor young fellow, Archdale, will be fit for work. He stumbled into the office, and took his usual place; and the next thing that happened he was in a dead faint on the floor. And he won't have his mother sent for because his grandmother is ill. How he will pull through it I cannot say."

Perhaps he would not have said so much had he foreseen the result of his words: he soon found he had raised a storm which was not easy to quell. Mrs. Bourne fell into an agony. She should never be happy again if the dear young man suffered from bad nursing and neglect—no one could blame poor Miss Medicott for being nervous. Cecilia persisted in saying it was her fault, and perhaps it was, but that only made it worse. Lodging-house servants were never to be trusted about fires, or medicine, or anything to do with illness; and she should never sleep a wink at night for thinking he was lying there in pain, and their horse the cause. In short, Mrs. Bourne was so unhappy, and unhappiness made her so exceedingly vehement, that she carried her husband's outworks by storm, and the citadel was fain to parley and surrender on her own terms.

"Take your own way, and let us have a little peace, Betty, for pity's sake. I should have thought one patient in a house like Miss Medlicott would have satisfied any reasonable being. But you are not reasonable, and so it is of no use arguing."

Thanking him as much as if the idea had come from himself, the good lady lost no time in availing herself of the extorted permission. Her orders were given at once, and before ten o'clock the next morning she was in Ernest's lodgings, armed with Mr. Bourne's authority to carry him off, then and there, to be nursed at their house.

And if Mrs. Bourne could overpower dear Nicholas, it was not likely she would be baffled by any reluctance on the part of a young man, too exhausted and ill to care much what became of him. All his remonstrances were quite disregarded; she swept him into the carriage before he knew where he was, and he was installed as chief patient in one of her best bedrooms, to remain a prisoner on parole till such time as he was pronounced fit for work.

"It was a fortunate thing," she said to Miss Wilmot, in confidence, "that he lost that merry-andrew of a boy of his, for one must have let him come, and I should have been in terror of my life. People who swallow fire and pull up tape are never to be trusted."

CHAPTER XX.

JUSTINE'S DIPLOMACY.

A MOONLESS night, an angry sea, a keen, cutting wind making the attractions out-of-doors, it was no wonder that Cosmo Dangerfield preferred lamp and fire within. He sat in his favourite room in his house at Ostend, musing over his coffee, instead of sallying forth for the brief nocturnal stroll that had lately become his habit.

The house had been hired in his name, and he had as yet taken no steps about letting or leaving it. Ever since his return, just in time to attend his wife's funeral, he had kept himself in-doors, admitting no one, except on such business as was absolutely imperative. Mr. Walrond, with whom it was necessary that he should have some intercourse, as his wife's executor, testified to his politeness, and could find no fault with his behaviour either at the mournful ceremony or afterwards. Without any display of a grief, which might have been suspected, his deportment was grave and subdued; the general impression was that he had felt the death of Hester more than he chose to show. All the wishes she expressed were to be attended to: and, in spite of the opinions held by many to the contrary, no opposition was to be offered to the will. He looked unwell, and owned to having met with an accident, which had delayed his return; and when it was observed that he shunned all his acquaintances, and only took a mouthful of air when the darkness enabled him to avoid them, rumours began to be rife, originating in con-

jectures, and by degrees gaining substance and shape from circumstances.

Old Justine, his sole attendant, did nothing to dispel these ideas. When waylaid and questioned, she only shrugged her shoulders and displayed the palms of her hands. "What would you have? If the poor lady did not rest in her grave, who could wonder, when her child was kept from her in her last hour? Her master had done all he could, poor man, and no one knew ——" And the blank was filled up by a shake of the head, more emphatic than word or gesture that went before.

It was reported, moreover, that Mr. Walrond's invariable reply to inquiries on the subject was that he knew nothing about it; which, as coming from a cautious old lawyer, was held to mean that he knew a great deal more than he chose to communicate; and, of course, allowed everybody to conjecture what they pleased. The desire to penetrate into the closed house, and assist at another *séance* under such exciting circumstances, increased day by day; and one or two attempts were made to bribe Justine into obtaining a private audience of the widowed philosopher. She took all such offerings with perfect amiability, though she gave the offerers to understand there were those to be consulted whom no money could buy.

"Well, monsieur!" she observed, on the evening we are describing, as she came in to make up his fire and remove the coffee-tray, "if you do not soon open your doors to the public they will come in at the windows. Here are two five-franc pieces, both given by folks who have very little to spare; they have questions to put which only the spirits can answer. I shall be ashamed to show myself at market if this goes on much longer."

"So long as you get your douceurs, old woman, you need not care," said her master. "For the rest, I advise you to mind your own affairs."

"Ah, bah! my affairs are those of monsieur. We have helped each other too often to part company now; and if I presume to give a word of advice, it is because I wish monsieur the good luck I should like for myself. Monsieur will take a petit verre after the coffee?"

"Yes; I feel the wind through the shutters. It must be a vile night at sea."

"Just such a night as I should like to choose for some folks to cross in," said Justine, with a knowing smile, which had a grim effect on her wrinkled visage. "That ma'am'selle, for example, who has the eyes and feet of a cat—and, no doubt, the claws too."

"Poor Miss Joseph!" said the Professor, as he poured the brandy deliberately into the tiny glass. "I have often thought her mind was weakened by her troubles."

"Tiens! I wish her body was, then. I have heard people say she must be a little mad. I wish she would just go a step further, and get locked up for life!"

"You are a pleasant couple to have to deal with, she and you; I know that. Please to remember what I told you once before—that if you got into trouble in that quarter I should not help you out of it."

"No need to remind me of any kind words you have said to me, monsieur. I know you too well. I have served you faithfully in your business before, and I'll do it again. I'll be bound to end one of your troubles now, if you leave it to me."

"Mind what I say, Justine—nothing without my leave."

"Yes, yes; that is well understood: and there will be time enough to ask leave when you can't do better. It is the waste of time and good stuff that vexes me—and, if monsieur pleases, I think I could make good terms."

"Ah, indeed! Getting tired, is he?"

"Not tired at all, monsieur, but dangerous. And, with young people, that is a serious matter."

"The young ruffian! I owe him already more than I can immediately pay, so there is no need to double the debt. You think he may do us a mischief?"

"Judge for yourself, monsieur. I found this under his pillow, with a box of matches."

She showed him a small canvas bag, half full of gunpowder. Professor Dangerfield opened his eyes with a significant whistle.

"Mischief, indeed. This might be awkward, certainly! But look here, old woman: gunpowder does not grow in my grenier, so how did it get up the stairs? Has he, too, got questions to ask, at five francs apiece?" He looked keenly in Justine's face as he spoke, but she only smiled in derision.

"Five-franc pieces do not grow in the grenier, either, that I ever heard of. When they do, I'll ask monsieur to let me end my days there. Monsieur may please himself, but I should say it was worth a hundred to come to terms before we have the roof of the house blown across the digue."

"I agree with you there, Justine. So you may arrange the matter if you can, on one understanding. I *must* be master. I will have no partner in my authority, and I follow no lead but my own. Good service I liberally reward; fidelity will always find me grateful; obedience will ever meet with consideration; but half-hearted, treacherous servants are worse than enemies, and will be treated worse. For them there are no terms, and there shall be no escape."

"Monsieur is right. I shall remember his words. I only wish some one else could hear them, whom he trusted more than I should trust."

"I wish he could, with all my heart! I would give more than your head is worth to have him here at this minute. I shall get no sleep to-night, thanks to that young rascal."

"Monsieur would trust that doctor again, after what I told him?"

"I trust nobody, but I want Mowatt's help and I must have it. No, you need not trouble yourself. I can send for him without you."

"Monsieur has a spirit, perhaps, who will fetch the doctor here?"

"Perhaps. Take care you don't meet him on the stairs."

Justine gave a little mocking laugh. Taking up the tray, she moved to the door, recoiling the next moment in a panic of absolute terror. For, as she opened it, she found herself face to face with Mowatt.

If any suspicion flashed across her brain at the moment that her master had been playing her a trick, it was dispelled by a glance at the Professor's face. He was staring at the new comer with an amazement equal to her own. Nothing daunted by such reception, Mr. Mowatt advanced to the table, unwound the long comforter that muffled his throat and mouth, and helped himself to a small modicum of spirits.

"Excuse me, Professor," he said, as he set down the empty glass, "but I have been so long making my way into your house, that I am half dead with the cold."

But, before Cosmo Dangerfield had time to speak, Justine put her shrivelled finger on the doctor's hand.

"It is himself in flesh and blood!" she cried, "and how he has got in at all I don't know. But monsieur does, I suppose, if he sent for him."

"Did you send for me, Professor?" asked Mowatt, yielding his hand to that which Cosmo extended.

"Whether I did or not, my dear fellow, I am very glad you have come; only why did you not ring the bell? Justine knows I have been wishing to see you, so there would have been no difficulty about your welcome."

"My reason was simple enough—I was afraid of being watched: and had to wait till the coast was clear and I could get round to the back entrance. Even then I should hardly have managed an entrance if your boy had not signalled to me from the roof how to open the pantry window."

"That boy again! But this was doing us a good turn for once, and deserves reward. Go up to him Justine, and make peace. I am ready to forget and forgive like a Christian, with the hope of getting some sleep to-night."

"If monsieur feels like a Christian, well and good," said the old woman. "I ask nothing better than to stay in his service so long as I know it is all trick; but if it comes to be real, why, I am a Christian too, and I don't like it."

"Your scruples are peculiar, my good soul. So long as people are cheated you are tranquil in your mind; but if we give them in earnest what they ask for, your conscience is offended. Rest easy;

you do the cheating so naturally that no one will ever suspect you of anything else."

She gave him a side-look of suppressed rage, and then asked if she should get a room and supper ready for M. le docteur. Yes, the room next the Professor's own; and supper as soon as convenient. If the doctor was perishing with cold he must be hungry too.

"Not hungry enough to eat *alone*," said Mowatt, emphatically. "I shall touch nothing but a crust that I have in my pocket, unless you share it with me. Justine's sauces are too rich to be trusted."

"You hear that, Justine?" said the Professor. "Supper for two at nine o'clock—the best you can get. Go at once and see about it, before they shut up at Goujat's. You have no prejudice against that restaurant, doctor?"

"I have no prejudices at all. I will try anything in which you keep me company."

"Good, good," muttered Justine, hastily, as she left the room grumbling to herself. "I am not going to tramp through the cold wind at this time of night just to please you—much obliged all the same. I'll see if I can't find a messenger who will be glad of the run."

She went down to her kitchen, which, though gloomy enough by day, could wear a cheerful aspect when the lamp was lit, and the stove was humming, and her little table was spread for supper. Having made a few additional arrangements, and set another chair to keep her own company, she looked round with a nod of complacency, as if certain all would be right; and then took her weary way to the top of the house: where, as the reader has already discovered, Paul Rocket was held in temporary durance.

That it was rather a perilous task she had undertaken, and that she was aware of the fact, may be inferred from the wariness with which she went to work. Before venturing to unlock the door she coughed vehemently; and, as that produced no response, knocked several times, repeating her assurance that it was only old Justine. When a voice at last bade her enter, she held the door cautiously at first, peering round to make sure that no assault was intended. A gust of wind nearly blew out her candle, and the cold of the garret struck through her bones. No wonder, she thought, when looking up she saw the stars shining through an open trap-door, through which the prisoner had just been taking the air on the roof, by the help of a cord still dangling from the rafters.

"Come on, old lady," he said, amused by her consternation; "if you wish to try rope dancing, now is your time, and a splendid peep of the sea into the bargain. It is not so hard as it looks, any more than you are, yourself."

"Not to you, my child, with your light legs and strong head; but old women like me have only their hands and their hearts to depend upon, and your dancing is good for neither. Come now; I want a

quiet word with you before we go down to the kitchen and see what we can have for supper."

"The kitchen? Am I free to go there?"

"You will be, dear child, when you have listened to me for five minutes. I know you will hear reason and follow my advice. I have been talking to the master."

"He has got company, has he not? I saw a party trying the back door, and gave him a hint how to steal a march upon you, which he seemed ready enough to do. I'd let the sea in, if it came up to the house while I was shut up here."

"Quite right too, my brave boy; and the master begins to see I speak the truth, and it is against his interest to waste your time and cleverness in the grenier, when you might be learning secrets, and making the beginning of a good fortune down below. The doctor is with him, and when those two lay their heads together there is always some work in the wind, and the master will be glad enough to have you once more at his elbow, my fine lad."

"I daresay!—and to make me his tool—to use me when he wants to hurt some poor thing that can't help itself. I'll twist this rope round his own stiff neck sooner."

"No, no, don't talk in that way, pet; it only leads to sharp words and disagreeable situations. If we quarrel among ourselves we are done for. Can't you see that in his trade he is not safe while you are loose to run about the place and tell all his little plans and arrangements? Why, he might as well shut up shop at once and break stones in the road."

"Do you mean that he will make me serve him, whether I will or not?"

"I mean, my child, that it will be your best and safest plan to *seem* to serve him, as he wishes, for a regular fixed term, with wages; and that you take care while you are in his service to learn enough to set up on your own account afterwards. Mind, he will suspect you at first, after all you have said and done; but if he finds you are going in for the profession he'll feel safe enough, for you would take care not to spoil your own market. What I propose is, that you agree to work with him so many years, on the condition that you learn the trade and may be permitted to become a partner or else to set up alone, when your time is up. You are clever enough, and you will have saved money, and old Justine will be too glad to keep your soup hot when you have your own kitchen for her to sit in."

The lad was struck with her earnestness. He remained some minutes in deep thought.

That there was a tender corner in her withered old heart, to which, an accidental likeness to a dead grandson had, from the first, given him access, he knew already, and he had a certain respect for her cunning and resources, though he was apt to return her affection with but scant and careless observance. Her suggestion offered him an

escape from his present awkward position ; and the restlessness of his nature would already have made confinement intolerable, but for the hopes of release with which she had kept him up. He saw at once that no better chance would offer ; and with his knowledge of Cosmo Dangerfield it seemed to him the only alternative.

It may be remembered that he left Mrs. Raymond's house in the morning, to send a telegram announcing Emily's safety. The office was not open when he arrived ; and, while he was waiting, an early train came in. Suddenly he felt the pressure of a well-known hand on his shoulder, giving him an indescribable thrill, as he owned afterwards, that turned him cold all over. One look was enough at the stern face cast on him, haggard with pain and want of rest, to show that a struggle would be on very unequal terms, even if he had courage to attempt it. As it was, he shuddered to find how his nerve failed beneath the grasp of his offended master, and a secret awe crept over him at the thought that after all Mr. Dangerfield might have power in which he had not hitherto believed.

The Professor did not waste words with him ; he rebuked him for absence without leave, and asked what brought him there. Paul told the truth ; and he saw that the relief of knowing the child was in safety outweighed the failure of the enterprise. A little cross-questioning elicited an acknowledgment of the feat which had caused the fall down the steps ; and Paul, instead of excusing himself, frankly admitted that he would have done more, had it been required, to rescue Miss Stormount.

"You told me you only meant to make her happy, sir ; and you have nearly been her death ! I'll serve you no more, sir—and there's an end of it."

"Not so fast, my young friend," was the Professor's cool answer. "I have your written undertaking to serve me for a year, on receiving board, lodging, and clothing—all of which you have received. The law is against you, and unless you give me your word—I know you can keep a promise—to go home with me quietly, I shall take you before a magistrate for breach of contract. And, my fine fellow," he added, in a low whisper, "when you are taken before him it will be found that my pocket-book, containing notes and papers which I can swear to beforehand, is hid among your clothes. A fact which will send you to prison at once ; and, after your trial, may keep you out of mischief for seven years. Choose, therefore, whether to give in at once or fight it out against these odds."

"I knew," said Paul, when relating this afterwards, "that he could do such tricks, though I had never got hold of the dodge ; and it cowed me to think of the police-court and of being locked up for I didn't know how long. Miss Emily was safe, and so it mattered less, though it went sorely against the grain when I thought that Mr. Archdale and all of them would fancy I had been cheating first and last. However, there was no help for it ; I was a sort of prisoner on

parole, as he called it, and was not to run away till my time was up ; and so I went with him, and when we got to Ostend he heard his wife was dead. This gave him a bit of a shock ; but he held me hard and fast, all the same, and smuggled me into the house—it being always his game that people should not know me by sight—and then asked me if I would go to my work like a man. I told him I would have nothing to do with it ; upon which he said he had a right to punish me for idleness, and ordered me to the grenier, with Justine to keep the key. I might have got out, I daresay ; but I had the feeling that, wherever I went, he could reach me. Besides, I had given my word, and I knew how to keep it."

"I tell you what it is, Justine," resumed Paul, after pondering her proposal in silence ; "I could bite the bridle, like other people, if needs must ; but I can't stand being used against that poor little girl. The moment I found what I had been doing, I took the resolution to break with such a master. What harm has she ever done him that he should frighten her, as you must know he does—and would do again?"

The old woman's working mouth and contracted brows showed very little sympathy with this appeal to her feelings, but she discreetly refrained from arguing the point. She even conceded it so far as to observe some men never understood children till they had some of their own, and not always then.

"And look here, my boy," she added, coaxingly : "as you seem to take the young lady's cause so much to heart, how can you be of use to her anywhere as you can by monsieur's side, knowing all that goes on, and able to do her a good turn may be, when it is safe to do it ? The more secrets you find out the stronger you are, and the better terms you can make ; remember that ; and I can tell you, my child, I have now done all I can. I have told him things that startle him : and if you hold out any more he will try other measures, and I shall not be able to help you."

The negotiation did not last long after this. Paul agreed that there was reason in what she said, and it became evident that her arguments had not been thrown away. He was not sorry to follow her downstairs ; and he did ample justice to the supper she quickly set before him, laughing, as he enjoyed his meal, at her description of the bag of gunpowder which she had shown her master, as found under his pillow.

"Do you think he believed it ? I am not so sure that he is so easy to blind," said Paul, shaking his head.

"Well, I only know he suspected you of bribing me to get the powder, so he must have thought you equal to using it. And that puts me in mind they will be wanting supper at nine o'clock, and unless they know in time at the restaurant, their kitchen may be shut. They have no mercy on my old legs. Out I must trudge, hail, rain, or shine," grumbled she, giving, it may be observed, the continental

equivalent to that British formula. We prefer translating Justine's remarks rather freely, to the difficulties presented by a literal rendering.

"Can't I go if I am at large? It is Goujat's, I suppose?"

"Yes, you have been there before. Should you mind it very much? They will know what to send—four plates will be enough. You have nothing warm to wrap round you. Take this cloak of mine, and don't let yourself be watched if you can help it. That English ma'am'selle has eyes everywhere; and though she does not know you by sight, she will guess something by your coming out of this house. There! that is monsieur's bell. Don't wait to be told you are not to go, but make the best of your way, and keep your word to me, like a brave fellow, by coming back. You'll make your fortune yet; and, may be, win a young lady into the bargain."

CHAPTER XXI.

PUT TO THE TEST.

JUSTINE did not trouble herself to answer the bell till it had been rung a second time, and somewhat hastily, as if the Professor's patience was waxing low. When she did obey the summons, it was with her cooking apron on, with which she was wiping her hands; and her tone of voice, on asking if monsieur had rung, was that of an injured person expecting an apology.

"I rang to ask you about that boy. What does he say to your sage proposals?" asked her master.

"Paul, monsieur? He said he would be back by the time I had broken the eggs for the omelette; and it is likely he may, if I am interrupted like this."

"Back! Where is he gone?"

"To Goujat's, for the supper."

"You have let him out, you old hag?"

"Of course I have. He is ready to take service with monsieur fast enough, on reasonable terms; and I am not going to lock the door on your assistants, and do all their work myself, thank you."

"And you really expect him to come back, do you?"

"He promised he would, and he always keeps his word; monsieur knows that himself. But if I am to be stormed at for everything that I do, the sooner monsieur supplies my place the better. I have enough to do below, without listening to rubbish upstairs."

With these words she turned on her heel; and, slamming the door behind her, returned to her kitchen. A minute afterwards Paul dashed in, breathless.

"They'll send it round, old lady, all right. But it is as you say—we are watched. And I think I was seen, though I ran for it."

"Who saw you? That ma'am'selle?"

"Yes. That would not matter, for she does not know me: but a gentleman was with her, who does; and I have a notion he will be here presently. It was as well I had given you my word, or I must say I should have been tempted to go and touch my hat to him, instead of coming back."

"You have gone too far for that, my child; the master would hunt you down and find you if you buried yourself under a mountain. He has been asking for you, and I told him you had come to terms: so now go up like a brave lad, and make the bargain I told you; and if you can turn what you saw just now to account, you had better tell him frankly."

The boy gave a reluctant sigh, and left the kitchen to do as she advised. As he ascended the stairs his young face grew darker, and the lines of his mouth and cheek acquired a sternness, betokening some inward resolution, which might have had its influence on the negotiation had the Professor been able to study and decipher its meaning. His knock at the door was immediately answered by Mr. Dangerfield; he opened it and closed it again on his entrance, standing before it as if by accident, but with a plain determination to cut off all retreat. Paul's mind being made up, he did not care for this manœuvre.

"Well, youngster," was his greeting, "so you have come to your senses at last! What have you to say for yourself?"

"I have no objection, sir, to agree to what Justine proposed from you—to serve you as before: either for fair wages, or that you would teach me your profession."

"So! You have a mind to standing in my shoes some day? A very laudable ambition."

"Not to stand in your shoes, sir; but to find out how you walk in them and how they are made, that I may have a pair of my own in time."

"And with this prospect you will stay with me, and be my apprentice. It is not a bad idea, as you cannot get away as easily as you thought. For how long do you propose to agree?"

"I leave that to you, sir; only, when the time is up, we must start afresh. I may either set up on my own account, or you will take me into partnership."

"Very well. I'll think it over, Paul, and let you know. You can go down to your supper."

"Just so, sir. But I was going to say you may have a visitor presently, who might chance to make me a better offer: and I might close with him while you are thinking."

Mowatt said something in a low tone. The boy's quick ear caught it directly.

"Quite right, sir; it is Archdeacon Burleigh. I saw him ten minutes ago, and Miss Joseph was with him."

The friends looked at each other : and the Professor hastily drew out paper and pen.

"There, Paul," he said, having scrawled a few lines, "sign that, and the doctor will witness it, and then there can be no mistake about the agreement between us. I will take you as my apprentice for three years, and find you in everything; and if you are useful will reward you according to your worth. At the end of the time we will renew our terms; or else you shall be free to set up for yourself—if you can."

The agreement, such as it was, had hardly been signed and witnessed when the door bell rang. The Professor looked at Mowatt, who quickly walked into the next room.

"If those are our visitors, Paul, we must not keep them waiting. Tell Justine to show them into the drawing-room, and then to come up for my orders."

"And what am I to do, sir?"

"I will send you word by her."

While these orders and some others are being obeyed, we will join the visitors, and see how they came to be there at that unusual hour.

Weather being no obstacle to Archdeacon Burleigh, he had accomplished his passage to Ostend the previous night; but the tossing of several hours made even him glad of a little rest, and it was not till the middle of the day that he appeared at Mr. Walrond's office. A long consultation followed, touching Emily Stormount's affairs; and the possibility of some claim being actually set up was discussed in all its bearings, without bringing them to any conclusion but that there must have been some ground for the suggestion, and anonymous letter, some false dealing somewhere. The old lawyer, being engaged in the afternoon, could only send his clerk to show the Archdeacon the way to the museum, and, if necessary, assist him in obtaining admittance, which, as previously explained, was not always easy. The clerk, however, found his good offices superfluous. On enquiring for Dr. Thaddeus, and being informed that he was too busy to see anyone, the Archdeacon peremptorily desired the servant to go and ask where he was to deposit a dangerous reptile, which he had brought for the museum. The alacrity with which she hurried to give the message seemed to show a zeal in the cause of science to which the clerk was a stranger; for he could not help asking, drawing back from his reverend companion, if he had the thing about him.

"Of course I have, sir: and shall have pleasure in showing it to you."

"Thank you, Mr. Archdeacon, I should be most happy, but I have not a minute to spare. I must go back to the office."

And he was gone before the maid returned.

When she did, in rather a breathless state, as if she had run all the way, it was to ask the name, not of the visitor, but of the treasure he

conveyed. He produced his card, on which the reptile's Latin name was written below his own, and he read it aloud for her benefit, with a deep sonorous roll that evidently impressed her mightily. She again withdrew, holding the card at arm's-length, as if doubtful whether some of the prized qualities of the animal might not accompany its designation, and soon returned with a permission to enter.

In all probability the visitor's own name, being quite a secondary matter, was not even looked at; for Dr. Thaddeus met him at the door, as if expecting a porter with a box or cage; and finding himself confronted by a figure at once clerical and commanding, was evidently much disappointed. However, his national courtesy came to his assistance, and he instinctively called up all the dignity of which he was master, to greet one who appeared to expect to be greeted with the honour that was his due. His attempt to apologise was interrupted by the fine flowing compliments which the Archdeacon fired off, in more graceful French than generally met the naturalist's ears; to which he replied in kind, in such excellent English that his visitor at once acknowledged it by resuming his native tongue. How easily between two such men these grand civilities of speech might have been followed by controversy, we will not enquire; for before the armistice had been broken, the Archdeacon wound up one of his periods by begging permission to offer the great naturalist a specimen brought by himself from America—beginning, as he spoke, to feel in one of his capacious pockets.

"You Englishmen would be the masters of the world," said Dr Thaddeus, as he marked the action, "if your knowledge equalled your bravery."

"We don't know when we are beaten, eh, doctor?" said the Archdeacon.

"Nay, no one ever saw you really beaten, except by yourselves. Even I should think twice before I carried such a companion about me."

"We have got knowledge enough to keep us alive—that is the essential point, Dr. Thaddeus. This gentleman will hurt nobody in his present condition, whatever he may once have intended."

He produced a small box, containing the well-preserved body of an unusually large centipede, of the most vicious quality, killed by his own dexterity just in time to save his servant from fever, perhaps from death. The poor fellow's gratitude was so great that he had kept the creature for his sake, little anticipating for it at the time the honour of being cushioned in the museum of Dr. Thaddeus.

"Your feelings do you credit, Mr. Archdeacon; and I accept the gift with the gratitude it deserves. At the same time," he added, with a mournful sigh, "if it could but have reached me alive its value would have been increased tenfold."

"My dear doctor, in such a case you might have had to find *me* a place in the museum; and I question whether science would have

been the gainer by the spectacle. But unless I am much mistaken, you have gentry quite as dangerous not far off."

"Indeed, sir! I wish I knew where. I have a slight work on hand, a treatise upon animal poisons and their antidotes, to complete which personal observation is necessary; and this is difficult—most difficult."

"The kind of which I speak," said the Archdeacon, "are only dangerous to those who believe in them."

Dr. Thaddeus put down the case, which he had been examining through his glasses, and looked sharply at the speaker.

"Are you jesting with me, sir?"

"I would I were, my dear doctor. You, who are Emily Stormount's friend, best know how serious the matter is."

"You come from that poor child, and the brave young lady her guardian? Excuse me one instant."

He rang a bell and gave an order, returning to his guest immediately, with evident increase of cordiality.

"Tell me about her, and how she bears her mother's death, poor little thing," he said, with more tenderness than the Archdeacon could have believed lay under his harsh exterior. He told him all that had happened, and that he had come over to see what could be done, both to rescue Paul, and to fathom the mystery of "X. L.'s" letter. His plan was perfectly simple; he meant to go straight to the house and ask for the Professor.

"He may admit you, though he has been keeping in retirement lately," said Dr. Thaddeus. "And if he does, you may make up your mind for a struggle. The man is a charlatan, I quite believe, but he is clever in his own line, and I have heard things about him which, I confess, I cannot explain."

"Conjuring of the mystical order, my dear doctor—nothing more," said the Archdeacon, rubbing his hands.

"It may be so, but if you think to account for it all in that way, you will find yourself puzzled."

"You don't believe the departed are at the beck and call of a fellow like that, Dr. Thaddeus?"

"Certainly not, sir; but he and his class show an ingenuity in accomplishing their ends that is quite enough to perplex the uninitiated, and to terrify even those who think little of handling creatures like this. Ah, Miss Joseph," as that lady put her head cautiously in at the door; "I have something to show you, and something to tell."

"Is the box quite shut?" asked Miss Joseph.

"No; it is open for your inspection; the largest of the species I ever saw, and of the most virulent kind. No danger whatever, I assure you"—as she showed evident signs of retreating. "It was unavoidable, I know, but I regret to say it is not a living specimen."

"Oh, that alters the case," said she, entering. "I am not afraid

of the things when they are not alive. But your maid said it was something dreadful, and I met a young man in a state of great excitement about it. You are sure it is quite dead?"

"Here is the reverend gentleman who had it in his pocket; he will be the best witness." Then, as the civilities of introduction passed between them, the doctor added significantly: "His courage is one of the kind to meet your sympathy; he does not fear the dead."

"I fear Him who keeps the keys of death, and that puts other fear out of the question," said the Archdeacon, gravely. "The same reasoning may hold good with Miss Joseph."

"You know that poor child, I understand, sir?" said Miss Joseph.

"Miss Granard has written warmly of your kindness to them both."

"She is very good. I met them by accident, and they were not above making friends with an old parson, who has lost all his own nearest of kin. But, having announced that I do not fear the agency of those who are gone, I am bound to confess that the malice of those who are left makes me so uneasy that I have come all this way to take counsel with Emily Stormount's friends, and tell them what I know."

He related the particulars of his visit to the chemist's. The whole circumstance made a great impression on Miss Joseph. She cross-questioned him on the looks and general appearance of the dispenser, but shook her head at the replies.

"I am convinced," she said, "that my suspicion is correct, and that Mr. Mowatt is the man you saw. I have watched for his return here till people have begun to think me mad; and I shall go on watching till I catch him. A train will be in presently; I must not miss it."

"One moment, Miss Joseph—you mentioned a name just now: Mowatt. Was he your medical man?"

"Mr. Mowatt attended Mrs. Dangerfield at the last, and was very kind and skilful: but he knew of that trust, and he may have had his reasons for wishing to get it into his power. I don't wish to accuse anyone unjustly, but I cannot rest until I have cleared the matter up."

"You are going to watch the arrivals now: may I accompany you?" asked the Archdeacon, over whose countenance had gathered a cloud of sadness that might have daunted anyone less pre-occupied. Miss Joseph was only glad of such a champion: and they sallied forth together, to the great relief of the naturalist, who had been longing to be rid of them both, that he might examine his specimen.

The roughness of the weather made conversation difficult, but while waiting for the train, the Archdeacon walked his companion up and down the station, questioning her on many points, and showing so much interest in details that she indulged herself by dwelling on them minutely—rather too minutely for the object she had at heart.

The train actually arrived while their backs were turned, and before they could obtain a sight of the arrivals they had themselves been seen.

Nothing rewarding their watch, they agreed to return for the next train. In the meanwhile they visited the grave of the poor mother : a duty her faithful friend constantly performed.

"Can you believe," she said to her companion, who stood bare headed, looking thoughtfully at the spot, as if laying it up in his memory for Emily's sake : "can you believe that I have been followed here, and asked in confidence if it be true that Professor Dangerfield kept himself retired that he might consult the spirit of his wife?"

"I can believe anything of modern superstition, but I always trace it to some natural cause. If this report has been spread, some one has had a motive in raising it."

"He spread it himself, most likely ; it could have occurred to no one else. It would be a terrible day for him if such a thing could be. But if ever a spirit needed rest hers did, poor thing ; and He who gives it will not allow it to be taken away."

They returned to their post : and by the time they had seen another arrival the Archdeacon began to observe that his companion walked with some difficulty. He stopped abruptly short.

"May I ask, dear madam, at what hour you dine?"

"Whenever I happen to have time. It does not matter."

"To you, perhaps, it may not ; but some of us are slaves to habit, and I have been walking about now for so many hours that I must propose a halt, and trust to your pointing out a decent place where we can get some dinner."

She was willing enough to show him, but it required a little sharpness on his part to induce her to accompany him. Only the promise of renewing their watch afterwards bribed her to consent : though, as he rightly judged, it was many hours since she had tasted more than a little bread and coffee.

Goujat's restaurant and café not only sent out dinners and suppers, but afforded convenient accommodation for guests to take them on the premises. Being a little more crowded than usual this evening, it was some time before they could obtain what they required. Hence it happened that they had only just risen to depart when the Archdeacon caught sight of Paul : who was coming with Justine's order. He made a quick movement to intercept him, but the boy was quicker still, and in the dark there was no chance of his being overtaken.

"Who was that, sir?" asked Miss Joseph, of the Archdeacon.

"Don't you know him? Paul Rocket, the Professor's pupil and confederate? Has not Miss Granard mentioned him in her letters?"

"Yes ; but I do not know him by sight. He has been carefully hidden to enable him to do what we know he must have done. I heard he had taken service with a friend of hers ; and I wondered at the time how anyone could trust him."

"His case is most perplexing, but I cannot go away without an effort to save him. Let us find out what he came here for."

A liberal gratuity, when settling the bill, made the waiter communicative. The boy had been there to order supper for Professor Dangerfield.

"What do you say, Miss Joseph?" asked her companion, as they left the café: "shall we invite ourselves to sup with him?"

"I would fast for a week sooner than eat in his house," she answered. "But I am quite ready to face him, if that is all."

"Your friend, Doctor Thaddeus, warned me to prepare for a struggle. Are you ready for that, too?"

"I am afraid of nothing in the house, so long as I taste nothing. He has always been civil to me, and will, most likely, be so still; but he may try to shake our nerves, there is no denying that."

The Archdeacon smiled at the notion of his nerves failing, under any circumstances; he suggested seeing her home before attempting the adventure. This she stoutly declined, and they walked to the house together.

Justine's countenance, when she answered the door-bell, wore an exterior of grave reserve. She curtsied to Miss Joseph, and, in answer to the enquiry for her master, said that he had given orders for her admission at any hour. This was taken as if meant for both, and they followed her up the staircase into the reception rooms, in one of which candles were already lighted. Here she offered them chairs, and was withdrawing, when the Archdeacon stopped her to present his card, with a few words of apology for disturbing the Professor at so late an hour.

"No hour is late to him," said Justine, oracularly; "he is often up all night, and sleeps in the day. But he has seen nobody for some time, and it is only as a friend of ma'am'selle's he will see you now. Please to wait here till he comes."

So saying, she withdrew, leaving them to look at each other and muse over their situation. Neither spoke; but the senses of both were on the alert to detect the first indication of an approaching presence. The candles gave but a partial light, and the further end of the saloon was in darkness. The Archdeacon would fain have asked questions about the ways of the house, and the séances held there, but took his companion's hint to remain silent; and, in spite of his iron nerve, it was not without a start that he found Professor Dangerfield close to him, without being able to settle how he entered.

Miss Joseph, to whom this sort of surprise was not new, came to his assistance at once by introducing him; a ceremony which the Professor courteously observed was scarcely needed. The high reputation of Archdeacon Burleigh belonged to the world.

"Are we to bandy compliments, as we did at the museum?" thought the Archdeacon; and he accepted his share with nothing more than

a bow and an apology for taking up the Professor's time. He had called to speak about a boy, Paul Rocket.

"Pray sit down, Mr. Archdeacon. The boy shall be sent for if you wish. Have you anything to accuse him of?"

"I shall be glad to know if it is of his own free will that he has left his situation and his master: left without any warning?"

"Perhaps this paper will answer that question best. He certainly signed it of his own free will. I show it you in deference to your character and office, Mr. Archdeacon; but I do not admit that anyone has a right to enquire into the affairs of my household."

"May I speak to the boy, as you were good enough to propose?"

"Certainly."

He rang the bell twice, and Paul made his appearance. He bowed to the Archdeacon, and stood with his eyes fixed on his master.

"Paul, my lad," said Mr. Burleigh, without waiting for the latter to explain why he was summoned; "your friends in England do not like to believe you can have played them false, and I am come to see what your behaviour means. Mr. Archdale is sure there must be some reason for your even appearing to be ungrateful for his confidence, and Professor Dangerfield is good enough to allow me to ask you, in his presence, what I am to say to him when I return?"

"Speak for yourself, Paul," said the Professor. "You can tell the reverend gentleman whether you signed this of your own free will or not?"

"If you please, Mr. Archdeacon," said Paul, looking steadily at Mr. Burleigh, though his face looked pale and his eyes sunken, "please tell Mr. Archdale that I did not know, when I took his service, that I was still bound by contract to the Professor. I have now made a fresh agreement with him, and I must stick to it."

"You hear, sir. Are you satisfied?" asked Cosmo, blandly.

"I hear; but being satisfied is another matter. However, if it be as the lad says, I can do nothing but settle with him for his wages, in my friend Archdale's name. There, my lad," putting a sovereign in his hand, "I am sorry for your decision, and still more for your future. The work in which you are engaged is dangerous, and its objects are false and cruel. Better earn your bread in the roughest workshop than by making a mockery of that which the worst of us hold sacred."

"You may go, Paul," said his master, sternly. The boy bowed and left the room, having first laid the piece of gold on the table.

"Now, Mr. Archdeacon," said Cosmo Dangerfield, turning to that gentleman, "I have allowed you to speak freely enough, and you will allow me to do the same. To insult my character you may, like your friends, consider is a duty; but where is the mockery you speak of?"

"Sir, I spoke to the boy in your presence as I should have spoken behind your back. I am one of Emily Stormount's friends,

and I give you notice that we mean to protect her from your cruelty by every means in our power. The law is on our side, and it will be at your own risk if you meddle with her again. As to the mockery of pretending to hold communion with the invisible world, in order to deceive the ignorant and torture the helpless, I have used the mildest word that can express my meaning."

"You are angry, Mr. Archdeacon, because the spy you hoped to employ against me has proved to be my own chosen instrument—a valuable medium, over whom I have power beyond his skill or yours to overcome. Have you ever tested the science you call a mockery?"

"I have no curiosity on the subject, sir."

"You have no secret to clear up? No Samuel you would invoke, could the days of Endor come again?"

"Until, like King Saul, I make my God my enemy, I am not likely to follow his example."

"Your profession leads you to study men's hearts. Could you bear a sight of your own?"

"I ought to bear it, for it has been my study for many a year. Come, sir, this is trespassing on holy ground, which I am not prepared to allow."

"Priest! blinded by your own arrogance as you are, if I show you a spirit, more powerful than evil, more bitter than the worst you denounce in your pulpit, and tell you it has its home in your own soul, what then?"

Without waiting for a reply, he blew out both the wax candles, and at the same moment a curtain rose slowly from the end of the room, revealing what seemed a strongly-illuminated dial-plate, without cyphers, their place being occupied by an open rim; which rim, as they watched, began to revolve round the motionless hands. The Professor's voice rose like a hiss in his visitor's ear.

"Have you courage enough to test the oracle?"

"Not if I am to meddle with the apparatus," was the Archdeacon's quick reply. "Go on, by all means; it is very clever. I have shown youngsters worse at the Polytechnic."

"Show your children this; and let them profit by your teaching!"

The rim of the dial revolved more rapidly, and letters gradually appeared through the opening; forming at last, in burning characters, the word "REVENGE!"

William Burleigh, the priest and the scholar, recoiled as though a gun had been fired into his bosom.

(To be continued.)

A SINGULAR ACCUSATION.

BY M. E. PENN.

ON a certain February afternoon nearly thirty years ago, I, Fred Weston, then studying surgery in the Paris hospitals, was seated at the window of my bachelor chamber on the fourth story of a dull old house in the Isle St. Louis, looking absently at the placid Seine, which flowed just beneath. I was meditating on a subject which had been disagreeably obtruded on my notice that day, namely, my own pecuniary difficulties.

Absorbed in my reflections on this momentous topic, I did not notice a curious scuffling noise on the stairs. My astonishment may be imagined when the door was suddenly thrown open, and there bounded into the room—a huge ape, of the ourang-outang species, which, after performing some fantastic capers, clapped a paw on my shoulder, and accosted me in the familiar voice of my friend Louis Delattre.

To account for this startling phenomenon I must explain that it was Carnival time, and that Louis had assumed the disguise preparatory to joining the throng of masquers on the boulevards.

He was my fellow-student at the Hôtel Dieu; like myself, a thorough Bohemian, though, luckily for him, his pockets were better furnished than mine, his father being a wealthy notaire of the Quartier d'Antin.

"Neat thing in costumes, isn't it?" he said, complacently, removing his mask, and festooning his tail gracefully over one arm, in the fashion of a lady's train. "Your old concierge nearly had a fit when I put my head into his loge just now. But what's the matter?" he added. "You look as dull as a wet Sunday."

"Read that, and you will understand why," I returned, handing him a letter which had reached me that morning.

"From Isaac Ulbach? I thought you had given him the slip when you changed your lodgings."

"No such luck; read what he says."

Louis perched himself on the table, and unfolding the document gingerly, as if it were something in the nature of a grenade, and might go off unexpectedly, he read it aloud:

"'Monsieur,—When you quitted your old lodgings so abruptly a fortnight ago, you omitted to leave your address for inquiring friends, which was unkind to one who takes so much interest in you as I do——'

"Gets so much interest out of you, he means, the old Shylock," interpolated the reader.

"I have not lost sight of you, however, and I shall do myself the honour of calling upon you this day week, when I trust you will be prepared to meet your engagements; otherwise I shall be under the necessity of providing you with apartments free of expense—at Ste. Pélagie.

"Accept, meanwhile, the assurance of my distinguished consideration.
"ISAAC ULBACH."

Louis emitted a long, soft whistle as he refolded the money-lender's letter.

"The old humbug doesn't mean it," he assured me, consolingly. "It's just a flash in the pan to frighten you. He knows that you have a rich uncle in England——"

"Who will see me at the North Pole before he pays my debts," I interrupted, gloomily. "My uncle Probyn is a good-hearted old man, but he has the bad taste to be fonder of his money than of his promising nephew. Moreover, he has a horror of gambling; and if he knew that the greater part of what I owe had been lost at cards, it would be all up with my 'expectations.'"

"Why won't you let me help you?" said Louis, reproachfully. "You know I have more money than I want. Will a thousand francs cover it?"

"No, nor three thousand."

He opened his eyes.

"You are more deeply dipped than I thought," he remarked.

After staring at me a moment in sympathetic silence, he gave the matter up with a hopeless shrug, and rose, putting on his mask again.

"Well, anyhow, don't stop moping in this suicidal hole," he said. "Put your cares in your pocket, and come out and see the fun."

"Not yet; I must write to my uncle. I don't expect he'll help me, but I'll give him the chance. I must do the penitent and pathetic."

"Write in a shaky hand, with plenty of blots, you know," he suggested. "Of course you will go with the rest of us to the Bal Masqué to-night. Have you got a costume?"

"No; I meant to have hired one, but this affair put it out of my head."

"Well, you can get one in the Temple market for a bagatelle. Come down to my rooms this evening; we'll dine at the Café Anglais for once in our lives. Au revoir!"

And he took himself off, humming a student's song.

Left to myself, I took up the money-lender's letter and read it through once more, trying in vain to find a gleam of hope "between the lines." I felt dismally certain that my creditor would be as good—or as bad—as his word, and that in the course of a few days I should find myself in a debtor's prison.

Isaac Ulbach was a Jew, whose mean little shop in the Place du Panthéon was almost as well known in that quarter as the Panthéon itself. Ostensibly a dealer in second-hand jewellery and silver, in reality he was a usurer, and one of the most grasping and rapacious of his tribe, as I had discovered to my cost.

I had flattered myself that, for a time at least, I was safe from his importunities, in the world-forgotten corner of the city in which I had taken sanctuary. For the last fortnight I had been lodging in one of a group of ancient and dilapidated tenements (long since swept away) which formed a sort of cul-de-sac, called the "Impasse du Cloître," at the extremity of the Isle St. Louis, beyond the Rue du Pont Louis Philippe. The one in which I dwelt was at the end of this "no thoroughfare," and was built with the back wall sheer to the river, so that, leaning out of my bedroom window, I could drop a stone into the water. It was a gruesome old house, damp and dark and close, with steep stairs and long tiled passages, and a pervading fragrance of mould and mildew.

A capital hiding-place, however. There were no lodgers besides myself, no visitors, no passers-by; in the very heart of Paris I lived as solitary as a lighthouse-keeper. But if I had buried myself in the Catacombs Isaac would have managed to find me out.

Failing to extract any comfort from his letter, I threw it aside, and sat down to indite such an appeal to my uncle as should not only touch his heart but loosen his purse-strings. But the inspiration would not come at my call. I spoilt half a dozen sheets of paper, scribbled my blotting-book all over with horses' heads, and then gave it up as a bad job. Being by this time heartily tired of my own company, I resolved to take a stroll on the Boulevards, and write my letter when I returned.

The clock of Nôtre Dame was striking four as I crossed the Pont Louis Philippe. The river flashed and sparkled in the afternoon sunlight, reflecting a cloudless sky; the air was as mild as if the month had been May instead of February. Even Nature seemed to sympathise with the universal holiday.

The Carnival *was* the Carnival in those days, not the dismal mockery it has become of late years, and when I reached the Boulevards the revelry was at its height. The pavements were lined with spectators, and the horse-road thronged with masquers on foot or in vehicles, their costumes forming a mass of variegated brightness which united in fresh combinations every moment, like the changing colours of a kaleidoscope.

Pierrots and Polichinelles, harlequins and diabolins, Turks and débardeurs; English milords, with shark-like teeth, sandy whiskers and Scotch caps; a shipful of sailors, a waggon-load of burlesque Pompiers, then a car of clowns and acrobats, followed by a great cage-ful of monkeys, among whom I recognised my friend. Such a bright, gay, crowded scene, such frolicsome uproar and contagious

gaiety that surely none but a misanthrope could have looked on in disapproval.

For the time, I forgot all my troubles and perplexities, and entered into the spirit of the scene as thoroughly as if I had not a care in the world. But when the crowd began to thin, as the afternoon waned, I suddenly recollected that I had not yet written my letter, and it was now nearly six o'clock. I was just about to turn into the Rue Richelieu, when I was startled to hear myself called by name in a voice unmistakably English. At the same time I received a violent poke in the back with the handle of a stick or umbrella. Turning round sharply to expostulate, to my astonishment I found myself face to face with the very person who had been in my thoughts at the moment—my uncle Probyn.

He was struggling to get through the crowd to my side, looking very much flushed and "flustered," and tightly grasped the umbrella with which he had assaulted me, and which, like himself, was of rather a plethoric habit.

"Why, uncle!" I exclaimed, as we shook hands, "I can hardly believe my eyes! Who would have expected to see you here?"

"No one who knew me, I should think," he returned, drily. "You won't catch me in a Carnival crowd again—Bedlam let loose! I am glad to see," he added, glancing at me approvingly, "that you have not made a tomfool of yourself like the rest of them."

"I feel very little in the mood for folly of any sort just now," I answered, with an ostentatious sigh, considering how I could best open up the subject of my difficulties, and wondering whether it was any rumour of them which had brought him across the Channel.

"Give me your arm, my boy, and let us get out of this racket," he said, pushing his way through the crowd with the help of the stout umbrella.

"Are you alone?" I inquired, when we reached the comparative quiet of the Rue Richelieu.

"My friend, Drummond, was with me a few moments ago, but I lost him in the crowd. He came over to see his son—you know Sam Drummond, don't you?—and I thought I might as well run across and have a look at you. But when I called at your lodgings yesterday they told me you had gone away and left no address."

Here was the opening ready-made, and I plunged into it headlong.

"Why, yes; I was compelled to change my quarters for reasons which—the fact is, uncle, I am in a trifling difficulty."

He stopped short, tucked his umbrella under his arm, and glared at me through his spectacles.

"Does that mean that you are in debt, sir?"

Calling up as contrite a look as I could assume at so short a notice, I owned the soft impeachment, murmuring something inco-

herent about the expenses of my medical studies—"the cost of books, and—a—lecture-fees——"

"Books and lecture-fees!" echoed my uncle, with scornful incredulity. "Folly and dissipation more likely. How much do you owe, sir? Come, you had better make a clean breast of it."

Taking my courage in both hands I named the sum-total. The torrent of indignation that descended on my devoted head would quite have overwhelmed me, if I had not been aware that my uncle's wrath, like a tropical thunderstorm, was brief in proportion to its violence.

His lecture lasted all the way from the Rue Richelieu to his hotel in the Rue St. Honoré; by that time he had talked himself out of breath, and was considerably calmer. A glass or two of Médoc and a rest in an easy-chair had such a happy effect on his temper that, after a little more grumbling, sotto voce, he called for pen and ink, and produced—his cheque-book. He had taken up the pen, and I was already beginning to pour out my thanks, when he paused—ah, that pause!

"On second thoughts, I won't give it you now," he said. Then seeing how my face lengthened, he added: "Oh, you shall have it, but I'd rather send it to you. Shall you be at home at seven o'clock? Very good; give me your address."

I complied, and as he did not ask me to stay, and indeed, for some reason, seemed anxious to get rid of me, I soon afterwards wished him good-bye. He was returning to England the same night.

For the life of me I could not understand why he preferred to send the cheque instead of giving it me at once; however, as I trusted his promise, I did not trouble myself to conjecture his reasons for delay. It was enough for me that in another hour the precious document would be in my hands, and to-morrow I could free myself from the hateful bondage of debt.

Relieved of the weight which had oppressed them, my spirits went up with a bound; I found myself humming Louis' song, "*La vie a des attrait*," and executing an impromptu pas seul on the pavement. Would not I distinguish myself at the Opera Ball to-night! I felt as if there were quicksilver in my heels.

Before going in search of a costume, I resolved that I would drop in "permiscuously" on Isaac Ulbach.

I hailed the first empty fiacre that passed me, and drove to the Place du Panthéon.

His shop was open as usual—little cared he for fêtes and holidays—and he was in the little dark den at the back, occupied with a couple of rather shady-looking clients.

I burst in upon him sans cérémonie.

"A hundred thanks for your billet-doux received this morning," I began. "I had no idea you knew my present address, so you may imagine what a delightful surprise it was to hear from you."

"Yes, I thought it would be," he answered, quietly, glancing at me under his bent brows. He had a hook nose, an obstinate chin, and a mouth that shut like a trap. In other respects he matched his shop, being small and dark, and not too clean.

"But this is a day of surprises," I went on; "I have just seen a relative of mine, who was the last person I expected to meet."

He was suddenly interested.

"A relative? Was it your uncle?" he asked quickly, coming forward.

"You have guessed. It *was* that worthy man, and he —— But you are occupied," I broke off, pretending to be going. "It's of no consequence—another time."

"Of no consequence, dear sir?" the money-lender exclaimed in a tone of plaintive reproach, becoming all at once effusively civil. "But everything that concerns my clients is of consequence to me."

"You take such a deep interest in their welfare—fifty per cent., eh? Well, then, to relieve your friendly anxiety, I'll tell you that my uncle has promised to send me a cheque this evening. So rejoice and sing pæans!"

"Chut, chut! not so loud!" he interposed in an undertone, with a glance at his visitors which was anything but flattering to them. "There's no need to announce it *pro bono*."

"Or for the benefit of your friends there, who are listening with all their ears; very true. I shall call upon you to-morrow. *Au revoir!*"

"If it is all the same to you, *cher monsieur*," he answered, with his sly smile, "I think I will call upon you to-night instead. The money may as well be in my pocket as yours, *hein?*"

"Better; mine has a hole in it. Don't be later than seven, or I shall be gone—and the cheque too."

"I shall be punctual," was his reply, and I had little doubt that he would.

Half an hour later I was in the *Marché du Temple*, wandering in a wilderness of old clothes, and exposed to a running fire of shrill importunities from the *marchandes*, every one of whom declared (before I had stated what I wanted) that she had exactly the thing to suit me.

Resisting these temptations, and escaping with some difficulty from one old lady who wanted to invest me, *nolens-volens*, with a bottle-green overcoat, I continued my search between the rows of little cabins, but for some time unsuccessfully. There were masquerade dresses in bewildering abundance, but they were all more or less tawdry, tarnished, and common-place. I wanted something bizarre, original. At last, after some rummaging in recondite corners, I lighted upon what struck me as the very thing for my purpose, though it was not intended for a "*travestissement*," being, in fact, the genuine discarded costume of a Californian gold-digger

(the gold-fever was just then at its height). How it had come there was a mystery, but there it was; the serge shirt, the great thigh boots, leather belt, and broad-brimmed hat: I should only need a wig and false beard to make the disguise complete. As I had just, so to speak, "discovered gold," there was a beautiful fitness in this costume which pleased my fancy. I struck a bargain on the spot; the wig and false beard I purchased elsewhere, and drove home in triumph with my spoils.

It was now nearly seven o'clock, and before going upstairs I asked the concierge—a surly, silent old man, whose nature seemed to have got soured with waiting for lodgers who never came—whether he had a letter for me. Yes, he said, grudgingly, there was one; it had been left by an hotel commissionnaire a few moments previously: and he handed it to me with a distrustful glance, as if he suspected it of containing treason against the state.

I mounted the stairs three at a time, locked myself into my den, and opened the welcome missive.

There was a letter—but where was the cheque?

A dire foreboding seized me. My heart, figuratively speaking, sank into my boots, as I unfolded the note.

"DEAR FRED,—I thought proper, before sending you the money, to ascertain how that debt of yours had been contracted. Since parting from you this afternoon I have made some inquiries from an acquaintance of yours" (Sam Drummond, I suppose. Humph!) "which have enlightened me considerably on that, and *other* matters." (Oh, Samuel, my friend, I owe you one for this!) "As your own recklessness has brought you into this difficulty, your own ingenuity must get you out of it. You have nothing further to expect from

"Your indignant uncle,

"W. PROBYN."

This was a "crusher."

I sat staring at the letter, quite unable at first to realize my position. Then, in a flash, as it were, I saw the precipice before me.

In a few moments Isaac would be down upon me, hungry for the spoil. I knew him too well to expect to move him by my piteous story, even if he believed it, which was doubtful.

Most probably he would jump to the conclusion that I had appropriated the money to some other purpose, and dire would be his wrath.

Already I seemed to see the walls of Ste. Pélagie looming before me, and once on the wrong side of them, when should I get out again?

My only safety lay in flight.

I resolved to start at once, and so avoid an unpleasant scene.

I began my preparations in desperate haste, fancying every moment that I heard his footstep on the stairs.

I hastily packed a few necessaries in a carpet-bag; the rest of

my clothes, and a select library of medical works, I left him as a parting gift. There was a heap of odd things, however, which I could not take with me, and did not care to leave behind for him to overhaul.

It would take too long to burn them piecemeal, so I resolved to throw them into the river. I crammed them all pell-mell into an old leather portmanteau, putting in all the heaviest things I could find, including a pair of dumb-bells, to weight it.

I had just completed my task when I heard—it was not fancy this time—a footstep on the stairs, and after a pause there was a gentle tap at the door.

I would have given a good deal to avoid the interview, but there was no getting out of it now; I must bear as best I could his reproaches, taunts, and insinuations; I only hoped I might not inadvertently knock him down.

I was just about to admit him when, glancing forlornly round the room, my eye fell on the “digger’s” costume. A brilliant idea occurred to me. Disregarding a second more imperative summons at the door, I hurried on the clothes over my own, and assumed the wig and bushy beard, which were as complete a disguise as could be desired. Having done so, I opened the window and flung the portmanteau into the river, where it fell with a loud splash; then unlocked the door, and confronted my visitor.

It was not the Jew.

So much I saw at a glance, but I had not time to see more; for no sooner had I appeared on the threshold than the stranger, whoever he was, literally flung himself upon me and brought me to the floor, falling with me. Before I could utter a cry his hand was on my throat, the cold barrel of a revolver was pressed against my temples, and, with his face close to mine, he whispered—

“*Where is the cheque?*”

But the words had hardly left his lips when he started, looked at me more closely, then drew back with a sudden change of expression to astonishment and consternation.

“Diable!” he muttered, “it’s the wrong man!”

He stared at me stupidly a moment, then took his hand from my throat, sprang to his feet, and in an instant was gone.

I was too bouleversé by the unexpectedness of the attack to make any effort to detain him; and when I had picked myself up (none the worse for the tumble) and collected my scattered wits, the ludicrous side of the adventure struck me so forcibly that I sat down and laughed till I was exhausted.

Thinking it over, I concluded that my late visitor was one of Isaac Ulbach’s “ugly customers,” who had overheard my incautious mention of the cheque, and had followed me home from the shop. It was easy for him to enter the house without being noticed by the concierge, who seldom put his head out of his loge.

I was still chuckling over the thought of how the thief had been "sold," when once more there was a footstep on the stairs. No doubt about its being Isaac this time, for I could hear him grumbling, under his breath, at having to mount so high.

I hastily adjusted my wig, which had got disarranged in the scuffle, took up the valise I had packed, and presented myself at the door before he had time to knock.

He started and retreated a step, not recognizing me in the least.

"Did you want me, monsieur?" I demanded, politely, in an assumed voice.

"Pardon," he answered, recovering himself, "it is M. Weston I want. I see that I have mistaken the room."

"This is his room, but you won't find him in it," I returned; and, brushing past him, I quietly descended the stairs, leaving him to reconnoitre at his leisure. Apparently he soon discovered the trick, for I had not reached the ground-floor when I heard him hurrying down after me, shouting "Arrêtez! arrêtez!" The concierge emerged from his loge as I passed, but, though Isaac called out to him to stop me, he was far too much startled by my appearance to attempt it.

I got safely out into the street, hurried along the Quai d'Orléans and over the Pont de la Tournelle, and then proceeded more leisurely to Delattre's rooms in the Rue des Ecoles.

He was as far from recognizing me as the others had been.

My story sent him into such fits of laughter that it was some time before he recovered his gravity sufficiently to ask, "What do you intend to do now?"

Having divested myself of my theatrical properties, I had taken a seat and a cigar.

"Smoke, if you will give me a light. Thanks!"

"What are your plans, I mean? You can't go on dodging Isaac for ever. Sooner or later he'll run you to earth, and after that ——"

"The deluge. My good fellow, it's no use asking what are my plans; you might as well put the question to a man shipwrecked on a rock. Suggest something, and I'll do it."

He looked at me thoughtfully, twisting the ends of his neat little black moustache.

"Why not turn 'digger' in earnest," he said, at length, in the coolest way possible.

I started. The idea gave me a galvanic shock.

"Are you serious?"

"Perfectly. You are not wedded to your profession; or, if you are, it is a 'mariage de convenance' without much affection. Take my advice; 'throw physic to the dogs,' as your Shakespeare beautifully says, go out to the new Land of Promise where fortunes are

dug up like potatoes, find a monster nugget, and return triumphant. What do you say?"

"Hurrah for California," I exclaimed, starting to my feet. "I'll go—it's settled. I'm off to the diggings to-morrow. But stay," I added, with a sudden change of tone; "how am I to get there? I have barely enough cash to take me to Liverpool, and as for my passage and outfit——"

He interrupted me by going to his desk and taking out a plump little roll of notes, which he thrust into my hands.

"You shall repay me when you have found the famous nugget. I'll go with you as far as Liverpool; my father has some friends there, and it will be a capital excuse for taking a few weeks' holiday."

And so, in this off-hand fashion, my plans for the future were settled.

We agreed that, under the circumstances, the sooner I was out of Paris the better, and by noon the next day we were on our way to Calais by the mail train.

Ten days afterwards I found myself on board the good ship *Gold-finder*, bound for San Francisco.

The curtain falls on the first part of my story, to rise again after an interval of two years.

I shall not dwell on my sojourn in California. Suffice it to say that, happier than many of my fellow-adventurers, I found the Land of Promise a land of fulfilment.

Fickle Dame Fortune, after buffeting me so long, took to pelting me with nuggets by way of compensation. I was successful beyond my utmost hopes.

For eighteen months I stuck to the spade and "cradle"; then, being heartily tired of hard work and rough living, I resolved to return to civilisation.

I had more than once written to Delattre, but no letters had reached me in return.

I took ship for Havre, intending to spend a month or two in Paris before returning to settle in England.

I was anxious to acquit myself of debt, and to see whether my old friends would recognize me. I rather doubted it when I looked at the ferocious individual my glass reflected, bearded, with bronzed skin and unkempt hair. I should scarcely need a false beard and wig now for purposes of disguise.

It was a bright spring evening when I found myself once more in Paris, loitering along the familiar Boulevards, and attracting more attention than was quite agreeable, for I had purposely delayed "civilising" myself till I had called upon Isaac Ulbach.

I crossed the Seine and made my way to a certain café in the Rue Soufflot, where I knew that the money-lender was in the habit of taking his petit verre in an evening.

It was a dull and dingy little place, chiefly frequented by lawyers' clerks, small tradesmen, and the like.

The mistress of the establishment was a plump Jewess, who looked up from her crochet with a startled air when I sauntered in. Indeed, the entrance of such a formidable stranger made quite a sensation in the place; the habitués glanced at me distrustfully, and the garçon—an overgrown youth, with a shock of frizzy hair like a black mop—backed away from me apprehensively when he took my order, as if he feared I might assault him.

A glance round the room showed me that the Jew was not there, but before I had finished my coffee he came in, nodded to the dame du comptoir, and taking a seat with his back to me, was soon deep in the *Moniteur de la Bourse*.

There was a large mirror opposite to him which reflected my figure at full-length, and presently, as he raised his glass to his lips, he looked up, and our eyes met.

The change in his face was something to remember.

He started, put down his glass untasted, stared at my reflection a moment, as if fascinated, then wheeled round in his chair and looked me in the face. There was something in his expression that puzzled me. It showed not only recognition, but a sort of horrified astonishment.

Before I had time to address him, he rose, and approaching the proprietress, whispered an enquiry which evidently referred to me, to which she replied by shaking her head and shrugging her plump shoulders. After another keen glance at me, he leaned over the counter and whispered to her again. The words he uttered were few, but their effect was electrical.

She dropped her crochet, and uttered an exclamation which caused the habitués to look up from their cards and dominoes, and the garçon to stand transfixed with a coffee-pot in one hand and a cognac-bottle in the other.

"Monsieur Ulbach, what do you tell me?" she cried.

"The truth, and I am ready to prove it," he answered aloud, and turning round he pointed full at me. "That man is an assassin!"

I started to my feet. Was he out of his senses?

"Why, Isaac," I exclaimed, "whom do you take me for? Don't you know me?"

"I know you very well," was his emphatic reply, as he shook his forefinger at me, "though I have only seen you once before, and that was on the evening of Mardi-Gras, two years ago, at a house in the Rue St. Louis, where you had just robbed and murdered a client of mine."

There was a general exclamation of horror. I looked at him in stupefaction. He was perfectly serious, and evidently believed what he said.

"I remember seeing it in the papers," cried the Jewess, before I

could speak; "the 'Mysterious Disappearance of a Medical Student.' A man was arrested on suspicion of having tracked the young fellow home from your shop, M. Ulbach, but as there was no evidence against him he was set at liberty, and the real murderer was never found ——"

"Till this moment," put in the Jew.

I burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter; it was too ridiculous. Never, surely, had a man been placed in a situation so grotesque and improbable; accused of having murdered—myself!

"It is no joke, as you will soon find," said Isaac, grimly. "Garçon, fetch a sergent de ville."

"Wait a moment," I interposed. "I want to ask you something. Was the 'body' ever found?"

"No; it was thrown through the window into the Seine; a boatman heard the splash, but as the river was swollen by rain, the current was unusually strong, and must have carried it away."

"I see; that accounts for it. The victim was a friend of yours?"

"He was a client of mine," he answered sharply, "and owed me money, a great deal of money, which I should have had that night if you had not robbed him of the cheque—brigand!"

"Gently, Isaac," I said, as gravely as I could; "just put on your spectacles and take a good look at me. Supposing your late lamented client had chosen, for reasons of his own, to disguise himself in a 'digger's' dress, and a false beard, might he not have looked something like me?"

He started, and looked at me closely, but the next moment he shrugged his shoulders with contemptuous incredulity.

"The force of audacity can go no farther! To assume the name and identity of the very man whom you——That is enough," he broke off; "out of this place you shall not go except in custody."

The others murmured their approval, and gathered round with the evident intention of detaining me, by force if necessary, till the waiter returned with a policeman.

Decidedly the joke was getting serious.

"Come, come," I said, "you can't be in earnest. Let me have a few words with you in private and I'll soon convince you of my identity."

I was moving towards the door when he seized me by the arm. I shook him off with so little ceremony that he staggered backwards into the arms of the plump proprietress, who had left her throne behind the counter and joined the group. At the same moment the garçon returned with two policemen, one of whom was in plain clothes.

"That is the man," the waiter said, indicating me.

"Yes, that is the man—the robber and assassin!" cried Isaac, excitedly. "He has just assaulted me, as messieurs here can testify."

Upon that, all the tongues were let loose at once. In vain I endeavoured to explain. I could not even make myself heard, much less understood.

At length the "agent" in plain clothes, who had listened to it all without comment, turned to me and said civilly: "Monsieur will have an opportunity of explaining himself before the Commissaire de Police," which I took as a polite intimation that I might consider myself in custody until further notice.

"If monsieur prefers it, we can have a carriage," he added, considerately. I certainly did prefer it, under the circumstances. So the shock-headed garçon was despatched for a fiacre, which I entered, followed by Isaac and the policeman in plain clothes; he of the cocked hat and sword returned to his beat.

The Commissary of the quarter was a little, yellow, high-dried man, like a resuscitated mummy, who took snuff incessantly during the interview.

Having listened in silence to the agent's statement and Isaac's charge, he turned to me for my explanation.

In response, I related the story of my escapade pretty much as I have written it here, glancing from time to time at Isaac, as I proceeded, to see what effect it had upon him.

His face was a study. Incredulity, doubt, astonishment, succeeded each other rapidly, giving place by degrees to a half-reluctant conviction.

But when I told of my brilliant success in California, and added that I had returned to Paris for the express purpose of paying my old debt, his expression changed with ludicrous abruptness.

As if a flood of light had suddenly burst upon his mind, he started to his feet.

"It is himself!" he exclaimed, rapturously, seizing my hand. "Ah, cher monsieur, can you ever forgive me for having been so blind?—so——Monsieur le Commissaire," he broke off, "I ask a hundred pardons; I was mistaken. This is indeed my long-lost and respected client."

"That remains to be proved," was the quiet reply.

"How! proved? but I have proved it by recognising him. I am ready to swear to his identity——"

"And a few moments ago you were ready to swear exactly the reverse—a somewhat sudden conversion, M. Ulbach," drily remarked the magistrate, to whom Isaac was evidently no stranger.

"But I had not heard his story then," he explained eagerly; "I did not know——"

"That it would be to your own interest to acknowledge him—just so," put in the other, with a smile. Turning to me, he added: "I forbear to comment on your statement, till I have made further enquiries. The friend you mention will be communicated with at once; meantime it is, of course, my duty to detain you."

This was pleasant ; however, I submitted with a good grace to the inevitable, and, having obtained permission to send a note to Delattre, I bowed to the Commissary, and, with a friendly nod to Isaac, who was loudly protesting against my incarceration, I followed my conductor from the apartment.

He led me down a short passage into a bare-boarded room, where half a dozen men off duty were lounging about the stove ; and here an official at a desk entered my name in the charge-book. Thence I was conducted to one of the cellules de détention—a cheerful retreat, with a stone floor and a barred window commanding an uninterrupted view of a blank wall opposite. He kindly allowed me a lamp and a copy of the *Gazette des Tribunaux* to beguile my solitude, and, having politely hinted that smoking was forbidden, left me to my reflections.

Forbidden or not, directly I was alone I lighted my pipe, and, thanks to the soothing influence, managed to get through the first hour of captivity with tolerable philosophy. But when my tobacco-pouch was exhausted, my patience began to give way. I anathematized Delattre for his tardiness in coming ; I paced about the cell like a caged hyena, consulting my watch half a dozen times in as many minutes.

When another hour had passed I began to speculate as to what would happen if my friend could not be found. Suppose Isaac's testimony was not believed ? suppose I could not prove my identity ? it was on the cards that I might be tried for my own murder, and really I was bound to acknowledge that there was a strong case against me, notwithstanding the absence of the "body."

It was now long past dinner-time, as internal sensations warned me. Recollecting the proverb, "Qui dort, dine," I stretched myself on the pallet-bed in one corner, and endeavoured to forget hunger in sleep.

I succeeded at length in dropping off, and, though my doze could not have lasted many minutes, I had time for a long and complicated dream, in which I was tried, found guilty, sentenced, and led to the scaffold. I felt the grasp of "Monsieur de Paris," I heard the click of the fatal knife, when ——

There was a cheerful sound of voices in the passage outside, the door was thrown open, and there stood Delattre, with the Commissary and his satellites in the background.

I may explain here that my friend's delay in coming was caused by his having been out when the messenger arrived.

He started when he saw me, as Isaac had done, but came forward at once with both hands outstretched.

"Weston, old fellow, is it really you ?" he exclaimed in English.

"I think so," I answered, cautiously ; "I wouldn't swear it. But 'if this be I as I think it be,' I owe something to you, for I found more than one big nugget."

"Didn't I predict it?" he cried, triumphantly, shaking both my hands at once. "Upon my word," he added, looking me over, "now that I have seen you I can make excuse for Isaac. Your own mother wouldn't know you, my boy."

"I trust M. le Commissaire is satisfied," I said, turning to that functionary.

"Perfectly, monsieur. M. Delattre has made a statement which confirms yours in every particular. I have the pleasure to set you at liberty, regretting that you should ever have been detained."

"And now," said I to Louis, as we left the building arm-in-arm, "perhaps you will tell me why you never answered my letters?"

"Parbleu! but I did. You never got mine? Then they miscarried. In the first I wrote I gave you a full, true, and particular account of your own 'murder,' which was the first piece of news I received on my return to Paris after a month's stay in England. As the nine days' wonder of your disappearance was over by that time, and the subject nearly forgotten, I thought I might as well leave you to enlighten the public when you returned. The mystery has had a dramatic dénouement, thanks to Isaac, who—— Parlez des anges!" he added, in an undertone, "here he is." He had been waiting for us outside. "Monsieur Ulbach," said Louis, gravely, "allow me to present to you your 'late lamented client,' who seems very little the worse for his sojourn among the fishes."

"Ah, monsieur!" cried Isaac, piteously, "if you could only imagine how I reproach myself——"

"Enough!" I interrupted. "Come to my hotel, and we will settle accounts at once, unless you have still some lingering doubts of my identity."

"If he has, the touch of the money will dispel them," was Louis' remark.

"And you will try to forget that preposterous mistake of mine, cher monsieur?"

"No, no! it's too good a joke to be forgotten," I answered, laughing. "Whenever I speak of my return from California, you may be sure that I shall tell the story of that singular accusation."



LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU.

ONE evening in the year 1697 a large party of noblemen and gentlemen assembled in the dining-room of the most fashionable club in London, with the evident intention of making a merry night of it. And a merry night they were in truth making.

They talked of politics, and two or three of them under their breath, with meaning glances at each other, drank "The King over the water"; they talked of literature, and a line or two of Dryden was quoted here and there by a gentleman who prided himself upon his reading; the verse may not have been exactly what it was when it flowed from the pen of the poet, but still his companions were fully satisfied with his erudition. They talked of the wine, and wished that the Burgundy were a thought more mellow; they talked of their tailors, and compared the prices of their velvet doublets; they talked about music, and one of them shouted out a lively song.

At last, having exhausted all other subjects, they began to talk about the ladies, and the charms of each court beauty, in turn, were brought forward and canvassed. One young lord had become entangled in the smiles and fair tresses of the lovely Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and told of the grace which was as the play of fresh leaves in spring-time when light breezes are blowing, and of the laugh that was as the warble of the summer brooks. Another gentleman, who wanted it to be generally supposed that he was in high favour at court, gave it as his most true and positive opinion that there was a dignity and sweetness about the bearing of the Princess Anne which put even the most perfect features into the shade. Old men said, that now-a-days there were no women fit so much as to hold up the trains of the fair dames who had sparkled, and ogled, and fluttered at the court of Charles II. Young men, with the twinkle of fun in their eyes as the wrath of these grave seniors waxed hotter and hotter under contradiction, declared that those queens of beauty of the past had been made up of nothing but rouge, and false hair, and padding.

After a while, Lord Kingston, the freest-tongued and most quick-silver-minded nobleman there, rose, and with voice and gesture asked for silence while he spoke. Very soon the whole party began to give him their attention, for the earl, as all knew, was a man full of gay conceits, and strange, brilliant fancies. The substance of Lord Kingston's speech was, that in that very room, and on that very night, he would produce a beauty who should so far outshine all the ladies who glittered in drawing-rooms, or flashed at ball or masquerade, that every man present should own her pre-eminence, and toast her with a shout of praise. How they laughed at the exquisite

novelty of the jest, as with whole volleys of lively, not to say saucy, fun they accepted his offer. The earl went out into the anteroom with unmoved gravity, and whispered a few words into the ear of his servant; who, with several companions, was loitering over a pack of cards and a bottle; the man immediately left the house, and Lord Kingston returned to the dining-room.

The minutes went by in noisy expectation, the party amused themselves with making the gayest and most absurd guesses. Would it be the earl's old family housekeeper who would come hobbling in on crutches? Would it be some stately maiden-lady aunt, all whalebone and vinegar, whom his lordship would decoy thither by an artful trick? One group made a little impromptu song for the occasion, another began to yawn as the moments wore on, and no lady, either young or old, appeared.

At length there was a little stir heard in the anteroom; the eyes of every man in the room turned towards the door, which opened to admit the airiest and brightest of fairy visions. Everything about the little creature that stood there seemed to sparkle, from her dark, liquid eyes to the buckle on her tiny shoe. There was a soft rustle around her of glistening black curls, and dazzling lace, and delicately tinted ribbons; the brilliant roses on her cheeks went and came in a changeful play of merry excitement. For a few moments she stood gazing wonderingly, and perhaps a trifle timidly, at the bright lights and the many faces turned upon her; then all at once the small feet began to dance, and the small hands to clap, as the glad cry, "Papa, papa," burst from the rosy lips, and in another instant his little daughter had bounded on to Lord Kingston's knee.

Every man in the room acknowledged, with a shout, that the earl had fully kept his word, and toasted the little Lady Mary as the greatest beauty in England. Such was the first incense that rose before the shrine of the future Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the queen, that was to be, of many hearts.

Lady Mary's mother died while her daughter was still a child, and the beautiful, high-spirited girl took very much her own way in the matter of her education. She enjoyed a far wider range of reading, and grew up with far freer and broader ideas about everything than was usual among young ladies of that day. She chose a path for herself even in these early years, and stuck to it with an energy that already showed the strength there was in her nature. She studied Greek and Latin, though, at that period, a girl of her age and rank would as soon have thought of learning the use of the sword and gun. She sat in her own room, when it pleased her so to do, instead of in the drawing-room stitching at worsted-work roses, and wrote long letters to pet female friends, in which she inveighed against the state of ignorance and idleness at that time almost forced upon women. She rode a great deal on horseback,

an exercise not as common with ladies then as it is now ; she chattered about things which she did, and things she did not understand. It came to pass thus that Lady Mary's character was cast in a mould peculiar to itself, and kept that mould throughout her whole life.

At the age of nineteen Lady Mary was called upon by her father to take her rightful position as eldest daughter and mistress in his house ; the earl was still, as he had been when he displayed her childish beauty to his admiring companions, very fond and proud of his girl, but he was a little frightened at the singular line of action she was taking, and no doubt he hoped that the thrusting upon her of these grave duties would clear the cobwebs, as probably he called her notions, out of her pretty head quicker than anything else.

Accordingly Lady Mary had to take lessons in carving, in order that she might preside gracefully at the head of her father's table. She had also to conform in her dress to all the fashions of the day, however ugly and senseless they might be, and to sit listening to yards of vapid talk spun by the tongues of so-called fine ladies. All these things were likely enough to have soon toned down Lady Mary's character into something as commonplace as her most severe and dull dowager cousin could wish ; but there was a glow, a freshness, and a vigour in her nature which nothing could crush out of it ; she would not be pulled and shaped exactly into the pattern of every other young woman of her rank. She began at once to make her own especial mark in society, and continued to do so throughout her whole life.

The time soon came when it was necessary for Lady Mary to find a husband. She had no want of lovers, as was but to be expected with her wit, and beauty, and high position ; the only difficulty was to know which to choose.

Among Lady Mary's female friends there was a certain Mistress Anne Wortley, who was dearer to her than all the rest, perhaps from an especial sweetness and gentleness of character, and to whom she poured out each most secret thought and wish ; and among Lady Mary's suitors there was a certain Mr. Wortley, who was this same Mistress Anne's brother. He was a man of some learning and culture, which made him a pleasanter talker than most of the empty-headed butterflies who surrounded her ; he was older and graver than she was, but probably, just by the rule of contraries, these qualities attracted the eyes of the airy, lively beauty especially towards him ; and, more than all, his sister incessantly advocated his cause.

She did not, however, by any means give herself at once to this suitor, favoured though he was ; she knew well enough that though she liked him, and in many respects thought highly of him, he was not exactly the man she could love ; so she coquetted with him for a long time, now by letter, now by word, first saying she would

marry him, and then that she would not ; but always in a measure relenting, when Mr. Wortley, with adoring sighs, appealed against a final decree.

Notwithstanding his importunity, Lady Mary would, very likely, never have become Wortley's wife, if it had not been for the injudicious conduct of her father towards her. He took it into his head that he would find a husband for her, and chose a man who, unfortunately, was utterly distasteful to the young lady. He tried, most resolutely, to force her into this marriage, and she, just as resolutely, refused it, but still he persisted : then the wilful beauty, determined to show that she was not to be given away like one of his lordship's horses or dogs, suddenly accepted Mr. Wortley, and rushed into a private marriage with him. Great, as may well be supposed, was the father's anger, but he forgave the pair after a while—for he never could long be cold to his beautiful Mary—and took them back entirely into favour.

For some years Lady Mary's marriage was certainly a happy one. With all the gracious warmth and strength of her nature she did her best to be in love with the man she had chosen, and Mr. Wortley was not insensible to the treasures of such a heart and mind as hers, which were poured out before him. He gave her back her affection and was very proud of her. After a time a son was born to them, and this brought fresh brightness and perfume into their home.

Some time after his marriage Mr. Wortley was sent on an embassy to Turkey, and Lady Mary, by accompanying him thither, gave what, in those days of difficult travelling, was no small proof of a woman's attachment to her husband. Her letters from Turkey form still one of the most graceful and sparkling books of travel that ever were written. In them we find her now counting the jewels in an Eastern sultana's casket, and telling of pearls as big as walnuts ; now among olive-skinned beauties in a Turkish bath-room ; now gliding over the moonlit waters of the Bosphorus, with strains of wavy melody stealing round her ; and wherever she is, and whatever she is doing, it all rises up before us with the vivid distinctness of a picture that seems ready to spring out of the canvas.

It was by her stay in Turkey that Lady Mary came to do the work which has caused her name to be stamped in illuminated letters on the page of history. The good effects of inoculation in stopping the ravages of the small-pox—a disease which at that period swept with terrible power through western Europe—struck her very forcibly ; and she thought, if only this mitigation of the awful scourge could be introduced into England ! The large-hearted, clear-sighted woman dwelt ceaselessly on this idea. A great longing filled her to bring such a blessing home to her country ; and, after a while, this longing grew into a firm resolve that she would do it.

The most powerful thing to strengthen the cause in England would be, she felt, some personal experience of the efficacy of what she wanted to inculcate ; and so, with quiet heroism, she had her little son inoculated, and the child passed safely through the trial. Encouraged by this, when she returned to England she preached inoculation everywhere. At first she met with the most bitter and violent opposition on all sides. The clergy cried out that she was fighting against the decrees of heaven ; the doctors that she was trying to reverse the laws of science ; yet still, pricked by the weak, struck at by the strong, mocked at by the foolish, this brave woman struggled on in her work for mercy and humanity, nor did she pause or waver till inoculation was an established fact in England.

The grave business, however, of spreading the doctrine of inoculation, and the anxieties attendant on it, did not fling a shadow over Lady Mary. There was a buoyant airiness in her nature that made laughter and merry talk almost as necessary to her as food. She lived in the very thick of society, and was often at court, where, that she was not looked upon as a woman weighed down by heavy cares, to whom a jest would be nothing less than a crime, is sufficiently proved by the following little anecdote.

One day it happened that Lady Mary left King George's drawing-room a little before he wished. On going downstairs she chanced to mention the fact to one of the gentlemen-ushers, who was loitering below. Hereupon that functionary, with a mischievous glance, declared that it was his solemn duty to see that no desire of his Majesty was disobeyed, and, catching up the lady, who was utterly struck dumb with bewildered indignation, in his arms, he ran with her up the grand staircase, and set her down at the door of the presence-chamber. The pages in waiting, enjoying, no doubt, the strangeness of the joke, threw open wide the door, and announced her name in a loud voice, and Lady Mary, with the eyes of the astonished King and Court fixed upon her, was forced, for the second time that day, to make her curtsy to royalty.

Probably no woman has ever reigned in her own drawing-room with more queenly dignity, and yet with more playful grace, than Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. She seemed to possess a spell for making people talk, and to exercise it with all the kindness of a good fairy. Her house was familiar ground to all that was most witty, and beautiful, and noble in the London of that day. Let us try for a moment to take a photograph of her room on one of those brilliant evenings.

The drawing-room this evening is full of light. The mirrors glitter, the gilding glimmers, the silk hangings glisten ; but the centre of all brightness is a lady. The harmonious tints of her dress shimmer softly, her white arms gleam, the sunshine of intellect flashes from eye to lip in changeful play. How her cheeks glow when the gentleman who has just entered draws near and speaks to her—for

Lady Mary cannot get out of the girlish habit of blushing ; and yet, even while she blushes, there is something of saucy arrogance, too, in her manner to this visitor. Who can he be ? His slight, bent, misshapen figure seems weighed down by bodily weakness. But glance at his face, and there is strength enough there. Mind sits watchful in those eyes, and satire lurks in the lines about that mouth. Wherever he moves, conversation hushes a little throughout the room, as though people feared him. Those who are not familiar with the house turn to look as he passes. And no wonder ; for who would not gaze at Alexander Pope ? Lady Mary is very proud of counting the poet among her admirers ; but still always, in look and tone, she lets him know that she is not afraid of him, as all the rest of the world is.

And now an old lady enters ; an old lady blazing with jewels, and rustling in stiffest brocade. The sunset of beauty lingers on her face ; she moves with the sort of grace of one who, even in advanced age, cannot get out of the habit of thinking that all eyes will be fastened upon her. As she sails up the room, some glance at her with respect, and some with a sneer, for there are those who love and those who hate Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough.

What covert spite there is in the smile of that man who is now approaching the hostess ; his eyes are brimming over with it too, though he tries to put into them the careless graciousness of the gay gallant. Lady Mary sees this plainly enough, as is evident from the angry flashes that, now and then, are darted towards him from beneath her dark lashes, but still her manner with him is very polished and courteous ; she does not forget that she is a lady, even with her bitterest enemy, Horace Walpole.

But we can pause no longer to look into that room ; the scene grows faint, the lights go out, and we ourselves must hasten on.

In the latter ten years of Lady Mary's life there arose a coldness between herself and her husband ; on which side the fault lay it is impossible, at this distance of time, and with our scanty means of gaining knowledge on the subject, to tell ; we are only certain of one thing, and that is, that it was no grave fault on Lady Mary's part that brought about the estrangement. No doubt her beauty and intellect drew many admirers around her, and no doubt, also, she was ready with both her smiles and her words, but at a time in England when license reigned in court and general society alike, she walked through the world as free from stain as the lady in "*Comus*" through the wood.

All the last part of Lady Mary's life was spent abroad ; Mr. Wortley remained in England, but letters were often exchanged between them, and the tone of the few of those letters that are extant seems to show that the pair still regarded each other with confidence and esteem. The picture of Lady Mary's days in her pretty villa near Venice, where she passed most of her time, is

bright and cheery. She made a little poem for herself in her garden and pleasure-grounds ; she took a lively interest in all public affairs ; she entertained large parties of Italian ladies and gentlemen, who came to her by forties and fifties at a time—probably her warm-hearted grace of manner charmed these children of the South. When she was rather more than seventy she returned to England, where she died peacefully after a short illness.

Alice King.



MONT ST. MICHEL.

THOU risest like a vision from the waves,
A weird-like form that fascinates the sight ;
Time, like the ocean, haunts thy dismal caves,
Dark with the misty shadows of the night.

How strange thy various fortunes since the day
When Michael, the Archangel guardian, showed
His will to Aubert : that, without delay,
Here he should build his tempest-swept abode.

Ye Benedictines ! who from night till dawn
Shrouded in these sepulchral caverns dwelt,
What dreams of youth, what vanished hopes forlorn,
By memory wakened, must your hearts have felt !

Kings, statesmen, monks have climbed thy rocky side ;
Sinner and saint have sought thy stern repose ;
Through thy dim cloisters shadowy spectres glide,
Whose prayers unpitied from thy dungeons rose.

A palace and a prison, both, thy walls have been :
The minstrel's song, the agony of pain,
Banquet and wassail wild, thy walls have seen—
Deep schemes of conquest laid, and foemen slain.

Here, doleful sights, imprisoned in a cage,
Eaten by rats, or killed by his own hand,
The rash opponent of a monarch's rage
Fled from thy terrors to a happier land.

How changed the scene ! no shadows rise to-day
To dim the brightness, or to cause us weep ;
Thy frowning walls with summer flowers are gay,
And ocean's waves rest peacefully asleep.

E. B.

GERTRUDE.

“ I NEVER see her, madam, without thinking of me first cousin, Sir Phelim O'Dowleston, of Castle Dowleroon, county Antrim. I daresay you have heard of him. Faith, he was a fine old fellow, Sir Phelim; and it was at his house I met her. She's a pretty woman now; but she has altered a power since then—grown paler and quieter than she was in those days, when she and Darrel Barnegat used to make the rooms ring with their fun and laughing.”

“ She and who?” suddenly demanded Mrs. Colonel Power, with very unmajestic sharpness. She had not been condescending to listen to Major Ogilvie at all. She rarely deigned to notice him at any time, in fact; but his last words roused her.

“ Darrel Barnegat,” answered the major. “ Barnegat, of King's Eagle; and it's a queer thing to me that it isn't Barnegat, of King's Eagle, who is here with her to-day, instead of that fire-eating Cuban.”

“ Oh!” ejaculated Mrs. Colonel Power. “ So she was engaged to him?”

“ Me cousin, Sir Phelim,” the little old major was beginning, when his eye caught the expression of Mrs. Power's countenance: or—to give her the full name that she insisted on being called, and that appeared on her cards—Mrs. Colonel Power. This expression checked him. The sharp face of that estimable but rigid widow was turned towards the unsuspecting object of discussion, and the black fan in the black-gloved hands was waving slowly, but ominously.

The major stopped at once. It suddenly dawned upon his mind that he had made a trifling blunder. He knew Mrs. Colonel Power and her sharp tongue of old; and, it may be added, was not one of her most fervent admirers.

“ It's mischief she means,” was his inward comment; “ and it's mischief against that pretty, inoffensive Mrs. Yorke. She has never forgiven her for cutting-out Cordelia, the stiff-necked old hypocrite in petticoats!”

The ominous waving of the black fan went on more swiftly. “ You were saying, I think, Major Ogilvie, that Mrs. Yorke was formerly engaged to a friend of your cousin, Sir Phelim,” continued Mrs. Colonel Power.

“ On me sowl, there's Jernegan!” exclaimed the major, enthusiastically. “ Jernegan, of Turftop. When did he come? I must speak to him. You'll excuse me, madam.” And, before Mrs. Colonel Power had time to give two waves to her fan, she found herself alone.

It was rather exasperating to be so bereft of a choice bit of scandal, which might have been used hereafter to an advantage against that

woman, her pet animosity, pretty, retiring, well-behaved Mrs. Yorke. Nothing on earth would have so pleased the august relict of Colonel Power, as to find something to cavil at, to condemn, even to *shun* in poor Gertrude Yorke. As Major Ogilvie said, Mrs. Power had never forgiven her for her triumph over Cordelia.

Cordelia Power, the eldest of three daughters, had inherited all her mother's graces of mind and person; and rumour said, that if Cordelia was not Mrs. Manuel Yorke, it was not Cordelia's fault; and the fact was by no means to be attributed to a lack of industry on the part of that resplendent, but somewhat raw-boned maiden.

Some years ago, Manuel Yorke, a wealthy planter in Cuba, had passed a season in London; had been intimate with the late Colonel Power. Mrs. Power, a manœuvring mother, had tried to secure him for Cordelia; but he did not bite. Now again they had met here at Carlsbad; Mr. Yorke had a pretty, gentle wife, and Cordelia was Cordelia yet.

This was why Mrs. Power was so stony in her carriage toward, so cordially detested, the pretty Gertrude; she made the young wife her especial detestation among the summer flock of idlers and invalids, considering it her special mission to crush her into humility, with much frosty courtesy, and majestic waving of the stiff-jointed, but marvellously genteel, mourning fan.

The hotel rooms were rather full this evening. There were several new arrivals; but Gertrude Yorke had taken her place apart from the rest, as she often did. Just now, as she sat talking to her little boy, she looked so singularly youthful, that it seemed almost impossible to believe that she was the child's mother. That she was an American, one could see at the first glance; her delicate face, girlish figure, and black-lashed, agate-grey eyes, were the attributes of no other type; but she left the country years ago—when she was only fourteen. An aunt, moving in good society, and a woman fond of gaiety, adopted her. In due time she had married Manuel Yorke. Since then she and her husband had wandered from place to place, until the present summer, when, her health failing somewhat, they had lingered at Carlsbad.

Notwithstanding the quietness of Mrs. Yorke's life, and her retiring, gentle manners, she was made the subject of a great deal of comment. People, who found it their duty to be curious in such matters, were a trifle puzzled as to the state of her feelings towards her husband. You cannot need to be reminded what the gossip of such places is. Mr. Yorke was fond of his wife, too fond: he was jealous, nervous, and excitable; his fiery Cuban blood asserting itself strongly in the smallest traits of his character. Nothing was more probable, said the dinner-table, than that the girl was afraid of him; and nothing so probable, said the ladies' drawing-room, as that the girl had given him cause for jealousy, and thence arose the occasional shade of sadness that touched her delicate young face. Accordingly, the best-

natured pitied her a little, and there were very few who did not agree in admiring her youthful beauty, and her tender care for the welfare of her child. Among the best-natured, the little old Irish major ranked first. He was persistently gallant, and persistently admiring; he was continually "on duty" in her behalf, warding off gossip and interference; and, in time, the girl grew grateful, and fond of him. She listened to his stories of Sir Phelim, of Castle Dowleroon, joined in his Dublin reminiscences, and encouraged her little boy's childish confidence in him; and, what delighted the major more than all else, she always relied upon him for advice and assistance if her husband chanced to be absent. So the major was not at all surprised this evening, during his conference with Jernegan, a few minutes after he left Mrs. Colonel Power, to hear the sweet voice speaking to him at his elbow.

"Major, if you please ——"

Or, rather, it may be said, that he would not have been at all surprised, if, on this occasion, there had not been a strange alteration in the voice—a strange, wild tremor, as if the speaker had been terrified.

He turned round in an instant; and, turning, was stricken at once with anxious astonishment. Gertrude Yorke was slipping from the divan, upon which she had been seated, behind the major, and before he or anyone else could catch her, she lay on the floor in a dead faint.

A sudden hurried movement around; and then some gentleman pushed fiercely past Major Ogilvie, raised the lady up, and placed her on the sofa cushions. At sight of him the major started in astonishment, and his countenance changed as he gave vent to an exclamation.

"Barnegat, by the sowl of me lady!" For, in moments of excitement, the major's tongue was apt to be conspicuous.

Mrs. Yorke was assisted to her room, and left to the care of the feminine body-guard, who made a general rush to the scene of action, ready to bustle, and sympathize, and assist, and prescribe after true female fashion.

Major Ogilvie held aloof. In fact, he was not required at all just now. He seemed to be in a bewildered mood. He was grave and silent, and, when he wandered outside to enjoy the cool night air on the terrace, his manner was so changed, that one might have fancied him under the influence of an unexpected shock.

Leaning against one of the terrace pillars, smoking a cigar, stood the man who had raised Mrs. Yorke. A tall man, with a pale, refined face. Major Ogilvie held out his hand, and spoke; some latent excitement or anxiety showing itself in his tone.

"By the powers, Barnegat!" he said, "this is a bad move."

Barnegat—a handsome fellow, I repeat, this Barnegat—long, and shapely-limbed; Barnegat stirred uneasily, and seemed to find it necessary to give himself time in which to recover his self-control.

"I did not know she was here," he said, at length, speaking huskily.

The major shook his head.

"A bad move," he repeated, "if I am not mistaken."

"How mistaken?" demanded Mr. Barnegat, fiercely. "What the deuce do you mean?"

The major cast a cautious glance around him, and then laid a finger upon the other's folded arms.

"Am I mistaken in thinking it isn't quite over?" he asked, in a low voice; "the old boy-and-girl love scrape."

Barnegat laughed. "What a sentimental old woman you are, Ogilvie!"

"I know what's what," nodded the simple-minded, good-hearted major; "and I know what she and you felt for one another. Have you forgotten it, and has she, or do you both remember it too well? It looks like it, me boy; this fainting the minute she claps eyes on you. Be open and above-board with me, Barnegat: let me have the naked truth; for I make myself a sort of guardian to the girl while her husband's away; she is too pretty and young to be left to fight her own battles."

Barnegat's cigar went whizzing out into the long grass, sent there by a desperate fling. The man's eyes were filled with wretched fire, and he broke into a little groan, checked in its birth.

"It's not over with me," he said; "it never will be over. I can say nothing about that, as to her. I don't understand women who can play fast and loose with an honest man's love. Women! I should say girls. What was she but a girl, a child of seventeen, when she led me on with her pretty whims at Dowleroon? What did she throw me off for? What had I done to deserve it?—to be jilted? Tell me that, Ogilvie."

But the major, knowing nothing, could not tell it.

"When I thought she was loving me with all her heart, I heard of her marriage," went on Barnegat, a pitiful touch of appeal in his changed tone. "And—I would like to ask what her husband has been doing to alter her so? Where have her pretty, bright, childish ways gone? I was watching her for an hour to-night, before I showed myself. She is as pale as a white rose, Ogilvie, and there's a look in her eye that would never have been there if she had been my wife."

The little major's hand was again laid upon his stalwart shoulder, with a touch as gentle as a woman's.

"Hush!" he said, kindly. "This won't do, me boy. It isn't safe. Sure, I scarcely know what to say to ye: and I know nothing of the past. Mr. Yorke made her acquaintance after you went away—and they were married not so long after."

No response.

"I'm thinking, Barnegat, that you had better, maybe, leave here

before her husband comes back. He went to Berlin a week or so ago."

"The devil take her husband!" broke out Barnegat, stung with wrath and jealousy. "I tell you I shall stay, now I have come. Is Carlsbad not as free for me as for him? You are getting into your dotage, major."

"If you would but listen to reason ——"

"She shall tell me why she jilted me," broke in Barnegat. "She must have had a reason; women scarcely do such things without one. When our regiment was ordered away, and I went to bid her good-bye, she clung to me, and cried like a tender-hearted child on my arm? The next thing I heard was, that she was gone somewhere with that meddling old aunt of hers; gone without leaving me a word; and here she is to-day, another man's wife, and the mother of another man's child; and the minute she sees me she faints dead at my feet. What does it all mean, I say?" his voice ringing out passionately. "*I don't know.*"

The major knew not what to say. He himself had always believed that some mystery must attach to the past: and he knew that it was worse than useless to contend against Darrel Barnegat in such a mood. He knew him of old; generous, impulsive, and truly Irish in his high spirit and lightness of heart; but there had never yet been a Barnegat who was not a whirlwind when driven to desperation. In his good-natured anxiety for his favourite, the poor little major felt terribly nervous. Perhaps, odd though it may seem, his nervousness arose quite as much from an inward fear of Mrs. Power, as from weightier causes. Suppose this unreasonable, excitable Barnegat raised a commotion, and caused a scandal! What would not that mischief-making colonel's widow make of it!

"For heaven's sake, me boy," he said, "listen to reason. Think of the poor girl, an' think of the tabbies watching her. Did ye see the ould cormorant, with the black fan? If ye didn't, just look out for her. She will be on the watch for *you*; mark that."

Mr. Barnegat made no reply. Turning away, he went forth into the dusky night.

On the following morning as Major Ogilvie was drinking his dose of the waters with the rest, he felt a light touch upon his arm, and, turning round, found the girl's pretty, pale face, quite close to his shoulder.

"Good morning," she said, in a voice so pathetically sweet, that it thrilled him to the heart. "Please to fill my glass for me, major."

She thanked him when he handed it to her, and, as she took it, he noticed that the shadow in her sad young eyes was deeper than ever, and that under the black lashes lay faint rings of purple.

"I am glad that you are well enough to be out," he ventured to say.

"Thank you," she answered. "I am much better. The rooms

must have been too warm, or—or I was not as well as usual, major," slightly hesitating. "Please do not alarm Mr. Yorke about it when he returns."

"Of course not," said the major, bending down to fill his glass again, and trying to speak with good-natured indifference. "Where would be the use of the frightening a man's senses out of him for a bit of a faint?" But, thought the major to himself, other tongues will be busy, though mine is still.

Mrs. Yorke said nothing more, and the major refilled his glass.

While he drank the contents, she stood near the railing, looking away dreamily; but, when he had finished, she spoke to him again.

"May I walk back to the house with you?" she said; and then, all at once, the eyes she had uplifted to his, faltered, and filled with a pleading, desperate light. It seemed as if she knew he had read her heart; that it was of no use dissembling.

He put her arm within his in a fatherly way, as he would that of his own child, and they walked away; she holding to him with a curious strength in her slight, clinging hand.

Out yonder, beyond the hearing of the drinking crowd, was a line of linden-trees, with rustic seats beneath their shade; and, feeling that she was trembling, he led her to one of these benches, and made her sit down. He stood before her then, to shield her from observation, her pallor was so great, and the shrinking terror and grief in her large eyes so strong. Some movement that he made seemed to startle her. She misunderstood it. Stretching out her unsteady hands to him with the imploring gesture of a frightened child, he saw that she was in tears.

"Oh, major," she cried out, "please stay with me!—don't leave me! Stay with me as much as you can, until—until Mr. Yorke comes."

"Indeed, and isn't me best pleasure to be with ye, me dear," he returned, in a kind but light accent, as if he did not see her emotion, or know anything of the cause of her trouble. "And I wish the rooms were not so hot of an evening; I've been inconvenienced meself by it."

There was a great deal of tact about this rusty little major, despite his slight brogue, and his genuine Irish pride in his titled relations. Mystified though he was, he would no more have asked her to explain the matter to him, than he would have struck her a blow. He believed that she and Mr. Barnegat, who was then a lieutenant, had deeply loved one another in the old days, and why she should have married another, and why she should be so sad, he knew not. Giving her his arm again, they promenaded in the quieter walks, until the soft morning air had swept away the traces of her tears, even if it could not bring the colour to her cheeks.

Returning indoors, they encountered Mrs. Power coming forth: who professed much astonishment, and expressed it in her frosty

manner. Was it possible that Mrs. Yorke had so far recovered as to be able to walk out? She had observed that she left the hotel alone! Was it not somewhat indiscreet to venture out unattended, after so severe an indisposition? She had imagined Mrs. Yorke's swoon had arisen from some serious cause. A number of guests were inquiring as to the state of her health; among the rest, a late arrival, a Mr. Barnegat. In fact, the gentleman who had been near her when she fainted, and who had been the first to assist her.

Mrs. Yorke parried the concern in her gentle way, and escaped as soon as she could. What with it all, Mrs. Yorke would probably have kept her room, but that that would have excited even more comment, so she was seen about, here and there, as usual.

It cost the major a great deal of diplomatic effort to keep off an encounter between her and Darrel Barnegat that morning; but somehow or other, by indefatigable industry, he managed to succeed. Not so in the afternoon. The enemy was too much for him then. Seeing the two alone for a moment, Barnegat strode across the room deliberately, and with evident purpose.

The major was as good as nobody then. Mrs. Yorke half rose from her chair, white as death.

"Do not be afraid of me, Gertrude," said Mr. Barnegat, with bitter sadness. "I don't wish to harm you." And, flinging himself into a chair, he held out his hands to the little boy, who was clinging to his mother's dress.

"Won't you come to me?"

"Go to that gentleman, Eustace," said Mrs. Yorke, faintly, and the child obeyed her.

For a moment or so, Barnegat held him, looking down into his dark eyes with a working face.

"Your child is not like you," he said.

Gertrude turned her pallid face to the window, trembling. "He is like Mr. Yorke," she answered.

It seemed to the major that she was afraid of Barnegat; afraid to trust herself to look at him, or to speak to him. Why should she be?

It must have been her evident tremor which caused the silence. No one spoke: and the nervous shrinking in the girl's eyes was almost pitiable. The little major grew restless under it, and was actually glad when Barnegat broke the pause.

"I scarcely expected to see you downstairs to-day," he said. "I was afraid that your indisposition might be a serious matter."

"No, it was nothing," answered Mrs. Yorke quickly. "I often faint: I have not been strong for a year or two now." And the flutter of swift-changing red and white on her cheek attested to the truth of her words—that she was not strong.

Her very timidity held her farther aloof from Mr. Barnegat than any stern effort of will could have done. He could no more have

spoken out his passion of wrath and pain upon her, as perhaps he had meant in his anger to do, than he could have forced it upon a panting, frightened child. She shrank away from his gaze, clinging to her child's hand, as to a safeguard. Four years ago she had been a bright, fearless, happy young creature, every hour of whose existence seemed warm with the sunshine of youth. Surely there was something wrong, some mysterious cause, to work so great a change in her?

As he held to his place before her, chafing with the inward sense of injustice done to him; tortured by the love that still filled every crevice of his heart, Darrel Barnegat felt that his strong determination, to read the riddle, was for the present thrown back upon him. He did not abandon it.

But it was not to be read to-day, or to-morrow: no, nor for many days to come. On the morrow, when he had again approached and was exchanging a few commonplace words with her, he saw a swift change pass over her face: and she turned towards the door, as if moved by some slow, magnetic influence. There was no lighting up of the eyes, no glow of brightness; nothing but a touch of timid anxiety in her expression; and yet the moment that Barnegat caught sight of the lithe, slender, dark-faced man who was crossing the threshold, he was stricken with a fierce, jealous pang, knowing him to be her husband, as if by intuition.

The new comer came forward to her with a quick step—a hurried, restless step, one might say. There was a restlessness in all his movements, in his eyes and in his thin, dark, eager face.

He barely gave Major Ogilvie a greeting gesture, he simply glanced at Barnegat; he kissed his child. All in a passing way, as it seemed, while he took possession of his wife. It was just as though he asserted his right of command to her before he spoke.

"Gertrude," he said in a quick tone, "they tell me you have been ill."

"Not ill," she answered. "I felt a little faint an evening or two ago; the room was very hot."

"But I say you have been ill. I see it in your face."

"Indeed no, Manuel."

"Do not say no," he cried, as he led her away. "It is not true, Gertrude. Come with me, my dear. Your eyes look as if you had shed tears. Why have you suffered? Tell me all."

The little major waited a minute, and then touched his friend on the shoulder. "Let us walk outside," he said, "and smoke a cigar." And Barnegat followed him mechanically.

Once in the open air, under the shade of the lindens, Barnegat's passionate misery burst its bonds. He strode to and fro on the walk like a jealous, raging tiger. He did not know who was to blame for the past, but he felt a passionate hatred of the man who, it seemed, had rivalled him. He could have dealt him his death-

blow without a sting of conscience, though the whole of his after-life might have been filled with remorse for the deed.

"That is her lord and master, is it?" he said. "By my faith, he is a despot! What right has such a fellow to a tender creature like that?"

"Now be easy," cried the little major, soothingly. "You can't alter what *is*, Barnegat."

"She's afraid of him, I tell you! She's ——"

And, with that, Barnegat broke down. Flinging himself on a bench, he buried his face in his hands with a groan.

"Think how I would have worshipped her! think how I would have watched her, and cared for her delicate woman's fancies! I leave her for a week! Not for an hour. She's dying—be quiet, Ogilvie! It is my firm belief—and I now tell it you—that she is dying; dying by inches—as women like her do die sometimes."

The major was discreetly silent. The ghost of such a thought had more than once flitted across his own kindly little brain. He had seen times when the pretty favourite had seemed so fair and spiritual, that he had wondered if so much fairness and transparency was exactly the right sort of thing, lovely as it was. The beautiful eyes had looked large, and bright, and worn, as if the wine of life had been too strong for the delicate frame. His august relative, Sir Phelim, had once praised her as the brightest and merriest of his many light-hearted guests; now she was the quietest little woman in the hotel. But he did not say this to Darrel Barnegat. He let him wear out his hopeless rage, without interfering with him, and then set on to calm and sooth him with no inconsiderable tact and delicacy.

"Don't let the world see it, me boy," he said. "You are cut up, Barnegat, but don't let the world see it—for her sake; for her sake. Think of the owld cats here with all their eyes open; and that widow Power has got hers the widest. Poor little soul, she has enough to bear. Keep a bold heart for her sake, Barnegat."

And, in saying this, the major touched the right chord. Barnegat pulled himself together and began to grow reasonable.

When Gertrude Yorke met them again, she was on her husband's arm, and many a day passed before they caught even a glimpse of her alone. He was at least attentive, this husband. It seemed that he scarcely ever left her side. It was her he cared for, not the child. Her lightest change of expression never escaped him; her slightest movement, action, wish, was responded to. He loved her deeply; that was plain enough; but it might have been that his constant vigilance wearied her, for she was quieter and more frail-looking than ever. Her mute submissiveness to his will was fairly touching. She obeyed his very glance. He was lord and master.

And Mr. Barnegat faltered in his purpose—that of demanding of her an explanation of the mystery of the past. For one thing, he

could get no opportunity. From the time of her husband's arrival, they exchanged no words with one another, nothing save the merest recognition of politeness. Even the major was thrown out of employment, and left to himself, though the girl had always a smile and a gentle word for him. The people who noticed her most, began to comment on the sadness and languor of her pretty, pale face; and at last, one evening, a burly German physician burst upon a group, who were thus commenting, with a single guttural sentence, which fell upon them like a thunderbolt:

"Dot bretty woomans, mid her glear gomblexion?" he said. "Ach! Yes. She go into gonsumption." And he said it with the air of a man to whom it was no new idea, but a commonplace fact.

Barnegat was not one of the hearers of this, but the major was; and when, afterwards, Gertrude came into the room, leaning as usual upon her husband's arm, and looking, in her thin, cloud-like, white muslin, like a white flower, the major, regarding her attentively, felt his heart quicken its beating, while a strange sense of discomfort flashed through it.

"Ye'll have to take good care of her, me man, if ye'd keep her by ye," he thought.

All this time, the days passing on, Barnegat made no sign. A better feeling had come over him, and he respected the major's words, "For her sake; for her sake." One evening, when the major was in the linden walk, away from the lights and sounds indoors, Barnegat approached him.

"They are going away," he said.

"When?" asked the major.

"To-morrow," answered Barnegat. "Well, it will be over then."

"All the better for you," said the major. "Better that there should be an end to it. What good is it doing ye? Wearing your life out, grieving for another man's wife? It's but little use there is in crying after spilt milk."

Barnegat turned away his haggard face.

"It isn't that," he said doggedly, despite his misery. "It's better that I shouldn't be tormented with the sight of her, but I want to get an explanation. How do I know what she has been made to think of me, what it was that caused her to throw me off? I should like to know just so much, Ogilvie, and I—I cannot ask it."

There was a queer, old-fashioned rose-garden in the grounds of the hotel—a sweet, quaint rose-garden, rich with colour, and heavy with the perfume that floated above and around the hundred flower-laden bushes; and it was to this place that Darrel Barnegat chanced to stroll, without any purpose, when he left Major Ogilvie standing alone under the row of lindens.

It had been a rare treasure once, this patch of bloom and fragrance, but it had been somewhat neglected of late years, and the roses had

grown into a lovely thicket, stretching long, slender arms here and there, from bed to bed, and outbarring intruders with a profusion of sweet barricades. But there was still room for a ramble down the straight walks, and if Barnegat had any latent motives in seeking it, it was on account of its seclusion.

But some one was there before him, it seemed, though at first he was not aware of any presence, other than his own. The fair moonlight made the place as bright as day, and, in turning the corner of an arch of tangled rose-vines, he came suddenly upon something white standing in the path; a woman in a floating white dress, and with a white face turned upwards to the cloudless night sky.

"Gertrude!" he cried out.

She might have been a spirit. She looked like one as she turned slowly towards him, in the light night. Her thin dress might have been moon-lit roses. Her face was delicately colourless, her skin purely transparent.

It was strange that she did not seem startled; as perhaps, all things considered, she might have been. She looked at him a little wonderingly: for his presence had awakened her from a dream.

"Pray do not think that I followed you," he said. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Yorke. I did not know you were here."

She made a faint, quiet gesture with her hand.

"No, I did not think so," she said, in a low, calm voice. "I see how it was—but I am glad you came. I have been wishing, praying, for this meeting, and I think it has not come about by chance."

The sight of her had so amazed him, and she looked so spiritual and unearthly, that he could not find words just at first to answer her.

"I am glad you came," she said again; and her voice was so clear and sweet, in its mysteriously-sounding, half-wearied tone, that it seemed to float towards him with the perfume of the roses. "I have been wishing to speak to you," she went on; "wishing to tell you before we part—for we shall never see one another again—how it came about that I am Mr. Yorke's wife instead of yours. I promised to be yours, you remember, when we were in Ireland."

"Yes," he groaned. "Oh, my love—my love!"

"You remember that my aunt did not like you ——"

"No," he interrupted with suppressed emotion; "she said I was only a beggarly lieutenant; not rich enough for you."

"Do not blame her now, Darrel; she died long ago. It seems long to me, though it is not yet three years. It was she who took me away from you," continued Mrs. Yorke; "but she did not make your poverty the plea. She told me—you had not been gone a week—a terrible story of your loving another woman; not a lady, but a woman good people do not speak of.

"I did not know whether to believe her, but the tale was so circumstantial, so apparently true. She had just discovered it, she said;

she said the person had gone away with you. I did not quite believe her, Darrel, until you ceased writing to me. It was my love that made me weak and blind, I think ; if I had not loved you so, I should have known how easy it was for her to play that poor, glaring, worn-out farce, and keep your letters back."

"And she did that!" flared Barnegat.

"That is not all. I might have fought against that ; have waited patiently until you came back, and asked yourself whether or not it was true. Later we saw a paragraph in the *Times* about a skirmish in which you had fought and died. Died, Darrel!" And Mrs. Yorke swayed a little, and caught hold of the trunk of a tree.

"Oh, merciful heavens!" ejaculated Barnegat—but he said no other word.

It flashed across his mind so plainly now. He remembered the blunder, had laughed at it a thousand times, and yet had never thought that it might float to her, as it had floated to other people. Oh, careless man that he had been ! light, reckless man !—to fling away from his unsteady hand a cup so full of peace and love.

"Until the evening that you came into the hotel salon, I did not know you were alive," went on Mrs. Yorke. "It was that that frightened me and caused me to faint. Since then I have been a little frightened at your looks, Darrel, especially since my husband came : I thought you wanted to pick a quarrel with him."

"As I did," acknowledged Mr. Barnegat. "As I should have done but for—for your sake, and for Ogilvie. You cannot tell me that you are happy with him."

A faint colour stole to her face—he could see it in the moonlight. "As happy as—as—I can be with anyone now. He is very kind to me."

"Too kind," muttered Barnegat : "he leaves you no will of your own. He is imperious, impetuous, exacting. *Your* husband ought to have been one to take the tenderest care of you."

"He does take it ; he tries to make me happy—and oh, he loves me greatly. But I am always weary, Darrel ; I am sick, fading, drifting out of life."

"Don't say so!" he groaned.

"Look at my face," she said, turning it into the brighter light. "Look at my hand," and she held up to him the slender, immaterial hand that looked almost that of a spirit, so bloodless and transparent. "I am dying, Darrel."

Darrel Barnegat did not answer. Had not the same conviction struck himself?

"My husband does not believe me," she continued ; "but it is true. I am sure that I cannot be mistaken. And I should be glad to die, but for leaving my dear little boy. God knows what is best."

"He does not believe it?" repeated Barnegat mechanically.

"No, he does not. He says it was this cold northern climate

last winter that took my strength from me and made me ill : and he is going to carry me away to Cuba ; he thinks I shall get all right there. But I know better, Darrel. And I wanted to tell you the truth of the past before I leave—which will be to-morrow. I did not like you to think of me as false and heartless all the rest of your life.”

“And now hear me, Gertrude,” he broke forth, like a man awakening from a reverie. “I never had any thought of another woman save you. When I left Dublin I left it alone, nothing accompanying me but my thoughts of you. I have never ceased to love you ; I love you still. Even as I now stand talking to you, looking at you, my heart is aching with its bitter pain. Your aunt called me poor ; and I had quite enough private property then, as you knew, and she knew, to render us comfortable ; and since then I have come into a large fortune through my eldest brother’s death. I would have made you happier than *he* makes you, Gertrude. As my wife you might have been blooming now, with roses on your cheeks.”

“Fate has been against us,” she murmured, the hot tears trickling down her face ; “and fate sways us all in spite of our own will. It was surely fate that brought you to Carlsbad now ; it was fate that tempted me out here alone to-night while my husband is entertaining two South American friends, who are passing through the place, to dinner in private. I did not think of meeting you when I came out—the moonlight was so lovely, the night so balmy, that it tempted me. And now that I have seen you, Darrel, that I have spoken what was in my heart to speak, we will say good-bye.”

“Good-bye !” he reiterated, as she held out to him the attenuated hand whose touch was as the touch of a pitying spirit. “Only ‘good-bye’ after all these years of hopelessness ! Only to meet and say good-bye, Gertrude !”

“The suffering is mine, too,” she whispered. “Life has been so hard to me that I am thankful even for this parting. A little while ago I never thought to be able to say it to you. Good-bye for ever, Darrel ; and God be with you !”

Her slender hand slipped itself out of his grasp, and she passed with a swift step towards the hotel. Darrel Barnegat sank down upon the nearest bench, and hid his face upon its arm.

In the breakfast-room the next morning, Mrs. Yorke’s place was empty. She did not feel well enough to come down, it was understood ; and in the afternoon her husband took her away. The idlers in the hotel whiled away half an hour watching the departure. Two carriages full. Mr. and Mrs. Yorke in one ; the maids and the child in the other ; Mr. Yorke’s man-servant and a courier in attendance. She had married wealth, at any rate, if she had not married happiness.

Darrel Barnegat was left : left to wear out his passionate regrets

through the weary summer days. He stayed on at Carlsbad : there was a bitter comfort in the thought that she had borne some of her pain there. Only the little major understood Mr. Barnegat's silence, and the heavy cloud that just now seemed to hang over his life. As to Major Ogilvie, three-parts of his occupation seemed to have gone out with the departure of Mrs. Yorke.

News reached them the following year in the shape of an advertisement in the death-column of the *Times*, sent over by telegram from Cuba to be inserted. It chanced that Mr. Barnegat and the major were breakfasting together in London when they read it :—

“On the 10th of April, at Matanzas, Cuba, Gertrude, the beloved wife of Manuel Yorke.”



NARCISSE.

A Reminiscence of Paris.

AH, Narcisse ! my Paris cousin, he was very nice to meet,
 Strolling thro' the Trocadèro, in that cloudless August weather,
 Twisting curly black moustaches in his primrose fingers neat,
 Bowing, smiling, complimenting, gracefully and all together !
 New relations out of England—Jack and Nelly, Tim and I ;
 With old Aunt Matilda's money, wild to see the Exhibition—
 Poor old lady ! we had never known her till she came to die ;
 So we could not mourn her deeply when she bettered our condition.
 There's a scent of fleurs d'oranger and a taste of cherry ice,
 And a glimmer of white waistcoat, and a distant waltz's tinkle,
 That would bring Narcisse before my mental vision in a trice,
 Tho' I had lost count of all things else, for years, like Rip Van Winkle !
 There was nothing that he would not show us, teach us, have us see :
 Even if we kept him waiting, never dull, or cross, or tired.
 Posed before the salon mirror, who so debonnair as he,
 Knowing that all Art and Nature centred there to be admired !
 Tim has gone to Afghanistan, foremost in the Khyber Pass ;
 Jack had got his London parish to return to in September ;
 Nell and I—well, we have little time to spend before the glass ;
 For our holiday is over—but a pleasure to remember.
 Only Narcisse, prince of dandies—I believe that still he stands
 Where we left him on that morning when he saw us to the station.
 From the *salle d'attente* he waved his kind adieux with primrosé hands ;
 Then we saw him turn contented to the mirror's contemplation.

G. B. STUART.

A WILFUL WOMAN.

"IF you don't take compassion on such a devoted lover, and one who is so good and worthy of you as Mr. Crichton, all I can say is *this*," said Mrs. Hinxman, with much emphasis, as if she were leading up to a crushing crisis, "I shall have no patience with you, and shall think you are acting very foolishly."

The person addressed gave a little laugh, which sounded unconvinced, although for the last half-hour she had been assailed by arguments on the above subject, some a good deal off the line of application, others undeniably true.

"Yes, you may laugh," said Mrs. Hinxman, resuming the charge after a moment's pause, "but I can tell you one thing: this life you are leading is by no means improving. I do not say it has hurt you yet, although goodness knows the heads of many would have been turned by all the admiration and running after you have had. But what is to become of it all? that is what I look to. It cannot last for ever, and it will be a wonder if you are not spoilt for a married life, or a single one either, soon. Now, as Mr. Crichton's wife——"

"It has not been proved yet that Mr. Crichton desires at all to have me in that capacity," said Miss Graham, with another little laugh. "And if it were, my own inclination goes for something in the matter, I suppose."

"Your own inclination ought to be for what is good for you," said Mrs. Hinxman, sententiously.

"Sarsaparilla? Brimstone and treacle? What is it you give your children in the spring, Emily, especially the naughty ones?"

"Yes, that is just what you are like—a very naughty child, and you ought to know better at your age. And so I hope you will," concluded Mrs. Hinxman, shaking her head at her friend, as she rose from her writing-table.

Friends tried and true they were, since their schoolfellow days some dozen years ago. Mrs. Hinxman had soon married and settled down to household cares and periodical babies. Alberta Graham, beautiful, clever, and attractive in all ways, had, on the contrary, taken her full pleasure out of life, and now at thirty was better looking than she had been at twenty, and, what was to be expected, considerably more wilful. Like the Lady of the Lea, she had objected to the thralldom of marriage, although, like that ill-fated dame, she had had almost unnumbered suitors. Whether her heart had been always as untouched as had appeared it would be impertinent here to enquire, since the matter has nothing to do with the present history. If one might hazard a conjecture, it probably had *not*, being warm by nature, however much kept in check by strength of will.

About a month ago she had come on a visit to her friend Emily Hinxman, who lived in a pretty country house in the heart of rural solitudes in the West of England. Welsh hills formed the horizon at one side, but here the land was rather flat than otherwise, with billowy mounds rising here and there, and long lawns and meadows that now were green with May's own sweet greenery. The many intersecting lanes and dells and hedges were white with blossom, and feathery with bloom, and "fair, quiet, and sweet rest" seemed capable of being found here, if anywhere on earth. Mr. Hinxman was not a particularly rich man, but he hunted, shot, fished, coursed, and farmed at their various seasons, and was calmly contented with his good little wife and pretty children; and what can country gentleman want more? In good truth, he envied no man living, and, if he did not rave at his good fortune, did perhaps a wiser thing in enjoying it practically, without too much endangering thought as to its component parts.

For Fidus Achates he had a near neighbour, no other than the Mr. Crichton so much recommended to Miss Graham by her friend Emily. Mr. Crichton's house was larger than Mr. Hinxman's, his property more extensive, and his income more desirable; and Mrs. Hinxman had not been wrong in praising him, or in taking his intentions for granted. Her only error in the matter lay in supposing that Nature, who never mistakes our capabilities, had intended her for a matchmaker. With a very truthful turn of character, vehement sincerity of manner that bordered upon bluntness, and a disregard of caution and tact that would have been the despair of a diplomatist, she yet had entered without misgiving on this her maiden field of action. Moreover, her warm little heart being much interested in the result, she was now a good deal heated and discomfited that Alberta could not be brought to own the right amount of interest in the much-praised Mr. Crichton. Alas! it was with this very *much-praise* Mrs. Hinxman had defeated her own ends. Had she been endowed in the smallest degree with penetration of character, she must have seen that to urge Alberta to the match, to praise and be for ever bringing up Mr. Crichton's virtues, to throw the pair together too obviously, and point out the advantages of the union in every moment of privacy, was precisely the way to set her wilful friend against it. Happily, however, it had not shaken the friends in their affection for each other.

As Mrs. Hinxman prepared to leave the room, she said: "There! I shall leave you now to meditate on my good advice," and Miss Graham, rising too, opened a glass door leading out on to a balcony.

The morning sun had kissed and warmed it, leaving it happy for the day, although steeped in shadow; and Alberta, looking out from it into the fair sunshine dappling all the country-side spread wide before her eyes, took in the blent perfume of aromatic leaf and sweet flower with half-unconscious appreciation. Mr. Crichton had

walked over to breakfast with them on the plea of a matter to talk over with Mr. Hinxman, which would have kept a month without injury to any living mortal, and now the pair were together in some of their usual haunts about the place.

Alberta sat down in the balcony, doing for once exactly as her friend had advised her—thinking over her advice. There had been some truth in it, beyond a doubt. Conscience, on being appealed to, replied to Alberta that it was possible even she was getting a little spoilt by the life she was leading—a little too dependent on the homage and flattery, what though she might laugh at them; a little too confident of her conquests, a little too callous towards the hearts she made to suffer. She had honestly tried to steer clear of these shoals, but too much prosperity and pleasure are not less dangerous now than Æschylus esteemed them in his day. Then this quiet, settled life, so full of its own calm duties, giving leisure to cultivate the best and noblest part of the natures alike of men and women, had grown upon Alberta more than she had been prepared for. The very mountains on the horizon had become dear, and the country had something of briery wildness and sweet freedom about it that her own home, situated in one of the trim flower-garden counties, seemed to lack.

But did she care for Mr. Crichton? That was the very thing she had been asking herself for days without getting any settled answer. “And if I loved him I should not be in doubt,” said Alberta to herself.

What she did know was that she did not *want* to love him. It would be so ridiculous, such a tame ending to a career that had really had brilliancy and prestige about it—a bucolic wooing! love among the buttercups! Why, her father had said to her almost with his parting kiss, “Now, of course, that neighbour of Hinxman’s will fall in love with you, and I daresay we shall have you settling down after all as an Arcadian shepherdess!” And she would so like to go back and say to him: “Here I am! no Arcadian shepherdess after all—only your own old torment back again!”

Then Emily had, of course, shown every card in her hand the very first evening of Alberta’s arrival, and Mr. Crichton, although really unconscious of the plot, had followed her lead from the beginning. It would be so dreadfully prosaic to fall in like a raw schoolgirl to such palpable scheming, and say a ready “Yes” to the first “Will you?” Alberta felt inclined to be as provokingly impracticable as the horse that stands still until the groom is close to him, only to show him, at the last moment, a clean pair of heels as he puts the field again between them.

Well, if she did not love him, that was the easy course to pursue and disappoint them all. If, on the other hand, she *did* love him, she could quite fancy, like one who finds freedom in restraint and liberty in law, how the tame ending might unfold a piquancy and

grace passing the romance of novel-writer or poet. She sat dreaming of it for a few moments, looking at the May wilderness before her with a strange feeling at her heart, and then she thought, what if she ever came to deem those mountain barriers prison walls? if the quiet country life became commonplace and dull? and if she had not enough love for Mr. Crichton to sustain her through the 365 breakfasts to be faced together yearly, which some one warns us to bear in mind in our ideal views of matrimony?

The glass door suddenly opened, and Mr. Crichton, himself, with his mission written on his face, asked permission to join her on the balcony. If Mr. Crichton's face betrayed his mission, he had come there quite prepared to follow up the mute appeal by word of mouth. "Emily has sent him on purpose," thought Alberta, but she was wrong, for he had himself espied her from afar and closed with the opportunity there and then. They were quite and undeniably alone, all except a doll left by one of the children in a corner of the balcony, who stared at them in unblinking astonishment. He went to the point at once with a directness that made Alberta's fencing somewhat difficult, and with the eloquence which a manly nature thoroughly in earnest seldom fails to find.

He was some ten years older than Alberta, and nothing very wonderful perhaps—neither tall as a dragoon, handsome as Apollo, nor witty as Horatius Flaccus. But any physiognomist would have said at a glance his face was a good one, the eye and smile most notably so, and one might well believe that to the woman who loved him he would be, in life or death, worthy of her devotion. Something of this was in Alberta's mind, but was she the woman to whom Mr. Crichton would be all in all? It was very important to be sure of that.

He was saying, "This cannot be a surprise to you, for I have let you see my intentions plainly, and Mrs. Hinxman too."

"I do not say it is wholly a surprise," said Alberta, who had been zigzagging, so to speak, in her replies: as soon as she neared one dangerous extreme, rushing off in the opposite direction, and then *da capo*. A word of contradiction even from the doll, if it could have spoken, might have made acceptance easy and attractive; without it, it was flat and tame; besides, was she not in doubt whether she loved him? She grew petulant from her uncertainty.

"Then surely you can give me an answer," said he; "there can be no difficulty in that."

"None, of course," replied Alberta hastily, "and one thing it is my right to say—I *will not* be bothered and worried and persecuted about a thing that is entirely my own concern."

"Never by me," said Mr. Crichton, the smile of a moment ago changing to sudden gravity, "if I am to understand that you look upon my attentions in that light. I love you far too well to give you a moment's pain. Do you mean that *that* is your answer?"

Now Alberta's petulance had been, in reality, against Emily and her own indecision, but, like a pawn at chess, she could not go back. Since, with a man's dense stupidity, he had chosen to suggest her answer, he should even have it so.

"Yes, that is my answer," said Alberta, with unnecessary vehemence, "and I particularly beg I may hear no more upon the subject."

"*That* you shall not, be sure. God help me to bear this as best I may!"

There was something so simple and manly in the words, so earnest in the tone and the look he gave her, that the coldest heart might have been stirred. At this joyful moment the luncheon-bell clanged out, and Mrs. Hinxman, opening the glass door, exclaimed:

"Oh, here you are still. Come along, if you are ready." Thereby giving fresh evidence of her fitness for matchmaking.

The governess and children, with Mr. Hinxman, awaited them in the dining-room, and the meal was got through with the usual amount of conversation. Not that Alberta helped it much—a dangerous inclination to cry seemed to threaten her accustomed self-possession, but she had nothing to complain of in Mr. Crichton. He covered her silence, and brought the children to the surface of the talk, an infallibly successful ruse where parents are concerned. Then, with an easy transition from the subject of toys:

"That's right," said he, "you have spoken just in time—tambourine, gun, doll, drum, and toffy. I am going up to London this very afternoon. Has anyone else got commissions for me?"

An exclamation of surprise from Mr. Hinxman, who kept discreetly out of plots and domestic asides; a reproachful glance from Emily to Alberta. But Mr. Crichton was equal to the occasion, and had reasons ready made for change of plans, or aught besides. Only, as he held the door open for the ladies to pass out, in wishing good-bye to Alberta, he laid a certain grave emphasis on the parting word, that conveyed to her ear, as it was intended, something more than what is usually meant. Emily followed the schoolroom party to give some afternoon orders, and Alberta strayed back to her balcony alone. The doll was still seated in the corner with arms straight down and head thrown back, smiling insanely, probably at her own good fortune in being a doll, and not a suffering mortal. Alberta sat down, looking at the calm beauty of lawn and field, at the rugged mountain range, and at the smoke rising above the trees from the chimneys of Crichton Court. Its park boundary came close to the Hinxmans' lawn, across which an oft-trodden path wound from the house down to a ha-ha, and from the road concealed therein you entered Mr. Crichton's grounds. Nothing could be more peacefully fair than the scene, and nothing broke the stillness of it except the bees among flower-beds below, and the more distant cries of the lambs playing in frolicsome companies upon the lower lawn.

If she did not love him, she could remember it all as a picture of

idyllic beauty, where a Corydon and Phyllis might well make love, and woo, and wed, and where Mr. Crichton would doubtless soon forget the disappointment of to-day. If, on the other hand, she *did* love him, that scene might rise up and haunt her some day. Presently Mr. Crichton appeared, making his way through the walks past the flower-beds and croquet-ground to that path across the lawns. He walked on steadily, not once looking back to the house he had left, with head erect, but with a slower step, for all that, than when he had come that way in the morning. Alberta looked after him spell-bound. The lawn sloped; he would soon be out of sight; the ha-ha was reached, and the master of Crichton Court turned off and vanished from view as he returned to his solitary home.

And then she was *quite* sure that she loved him.

II.

It was just a year later. Alberta, with her parents, had been staying in this same county, when she got a letter from Mrs. Hinxman asking her to spare her a few days, if no more, on her way up to London.

"There are, of course, few attractions to tempt you," said the letter; "and in *one line*, at least, you despised what I once provided; but you know how welcome you are to all of us," and so on. Then: "I am such a wretched correspondent, otherwise I should have told you about our Militia Ball, which was so good. Little Jessie Bulteel came out at it, and looked so pretty. Mr. Crichton said she was quite the belle of the room, and I am going to have her to stay with me next month, *in hopes*. I tell you this, for I am sure you liked Mr. Crichton well enough to be glad he should be provided with such a good little wife as I have a private idea that Jessie would make him."

Alberta did not look back with pleasure on the year that was gone. A London season, and a constant round of visits and pleasuring during the winter, had found and left her bright and happy many a year before. Although her life's programme read somewhat a frivolous one, Alberta was no idle butterfly, and, above all, she had not led that exhaustive chase after matrimony which leaves so many shattered and spent before their time. She valued the solids of life as well as its sweets. Her lot had been a prosperous one; but, in the face of poetical justice, it need not follow of necessity that one carries a cold and selfish heart even along an o'er-smooth way. It had come, however, now to pass, that all through this year Alberta had failed to gather much enjoyment from any of the old sources. A regret, a contrition, an insatiable yearning for a certain idyllic and ideal country-side, haunted her, and spoiled everything besides. And now that Emily's letter had come, Alberta could not resist it.

She *must* go. Mr. Crichton might or might not be in love with Jessie Bulteel's silly little face. She, Alberta, was going to stay for these few days with Emily, not with Mr. Crichton—to try and lay the memory of that Beulah land, and look that mistake of hers, of which she was well aware, fairly in the face, and accept its consequences. And so she went.

She had only a few days to spare, so it was fortunate that, after a late spring, warm weather had suddenly set in, and the familiar scene wore as fair a smile upon its face as the one Alberta had left there just a year ago. Mr. Crichton was at home, and the second day after Alberta's coming saw him emerging from the ha-ha and coming up to the house on one of his usual visits. He had not chosen to break through his customary habits, and so the inevitable meeting took place. If there was something of constraint between them as they shook hands and described the weather to one another, it was scarcely enough to attract attention. Mr. Crichton was studiously friendly in the few remarks he addressed to Alberta; but how few they were no one knew better than she, nor why he made them so. He had strictly obeyed her somewhat vehement commands to be left in peace, and no doubt considered it necessary to carry them out, even in this minute particular.

"What a pity it should all be at an end," said Emily to herself, "when they would have suited so well; but Alberta never will listen to anyone's advice without she fancies it herself." Which was more true than grammatically phrased—Mrs. Hinxman having picked up this mode of expression from her head nurse.

The next day passed on, and then came the last evening, and a very beautiful one it was, making Alberta's heart ache at the thought of leaving on the morrow, although she had inwardly known but little peace or satisfaction throughout the visit. Mr. Crichton had come over to dinner, and they were not allowed to sit long after it, for the children had been promised to go and see "the peat-field burning," and were gathered in an impatient little troop on the gravel outside, one or other appearing at door or window now and then, with "Ar'n't you just coming, pappy? You've been such a long time at your dinner!"

Towards the left of the Hinxmans' house the ground began rising on its way to the mountains, and across a couple of meadows you came to a sloping field, shaded on one side by trees, where the peat was burning. They all went along merrily; the children, in full zest of contentment after their long waiting, wheeled and fluttered round the elders like a little flock of pigeons. Emily and Alberta had red shawls on over their evening dresses, and a basket with work and novels to read, if they preferred sitting down by-and-by. It was an exquisite evening, balmy and fresh, and the smell of the peat, mingling with the sweet air, was something to call forth panegyrics every moment. The labourers in the field, too—mostly women—

seemed so good-tempered and pleased to see them, working at the firing and turning the peat with none the less vigour for being under the master's eye.

The children were in ecstasies ; now venturing on daring contact with the burning peat, now running screaming away in pretended fright, and chasing each other in and out of the heated clods of grass and earth. Emily had accepted Mr. Crichton's arm to ascend the side of the rugged field, skirting its hedge. Mr. Hinxman took Alberta round about among the peat, now talking to the workpeople, now explaining to her how the weather had been too damp to do this burning sooner, and how the field would now be in prime condition for the autumn setting of corn. They were generally pleasant companions to each other, but to-night Alberta's heart was "throbbing with the May," and in secret she gave only a kind of sick man's attention to his farming plans.

Presently they rejoined the others, and stood admiring the pretty scene and the beauty of the evening. Now and then they played with the children, now and then strolled round the field, for the dew was falling too thickly under the trees for the projected seats and novels. The smell of the peat was delicious. As the shades deepened, the fires came out brighter ; sparks and flames now burning steadily, now running round a fresh piece of peat, or rising in the air. The whole field was a network of bright edges, sparkling and darting like fire-flies, and full of mystery and romance. They were all getting childish and merry, and the children were half beside themselves with the fascination and adventure of it all. Something of last year's cordiality flashed out again between Mr. Crichton and Alberta in the unguarded gaiety of the moment. It was much too delightful to be left, but the night was drawing on, and after repeated reprieves, the children, hot and excited, were collected together, and the homeward journey began.

In returning, the gentlemen running races and playing with the still excited children, Emily and Alberta fell behind, and reached the hall-door alone, when they found their basket had been left behind. Nothing would do for Alberta but to fetch it herself ; she said she had wanted all along to see that field again, and forbidding Emily to say where she had gone, she was off round the corner of the house. It was not far to go : only a short cut across two fields, and the gate was reached. Alberta had come so fast she was fain to stop and rest half-way up the ascent, looking once again at that fascinating scene around, and surprised to see how the moonlight, which had been so shadowy a while ago, steeped the country now in a perfect bath of light. Presently she became aware that one of the gentlemen had followed her. She stood in the dark end of the field under the trees, from behind which the moon sent tongues and shafts and trembling mysteries of light across the shadow. Her white dress, however, betrayed her, and, much to her annoyance, lest

she should have been supposed to foresee this consequence of her coming, Mr. Crichton in a few steps was at her side.

"I am so sorry you should have taken the trouble to come," she said. "I begged Emily not to say I had come to fetch it."

"Has something been forgotten? I have not spoken to Mrs. Hinxman since, but seeing you return to the field in a hurry, I thought you had lost something, and that I might be of use."

"Thank you; it is the basket; but I know exactly where to find it." They went a few steps farther on and found it duly awaiting them in all innocence in the hedge. Mr. Crichton took it up, and they turned their steps homeward almost in silence, Alberta walking very fast. Once she gave a little slip, but recovered herself.

"The ground is very slippery with the dew. Won't you take my arm?" said Mr. Crichton.

"No, thank you; I shall do very well," said Alberta, slipping again in proof of it.

"Is there any occasion to go quite so fast?" he asked; "the night alone deserves some notice. One could rarely see a finer."

"No," admitted Alberta, as they stopped still under the trees, "in moonlight, shine, and shade," to look at it. The fairies were busy at their revels, no doubt, if one could but have seen them. The peat fires smouldered a little. All the open country was spiritualised by moonlight; dew and enchantment were everywhere. Alberta and Mr. Crichton resumed their walk after a few vague commonplaces of admiration; now in silence, now with a constrained word or two that showed that silence noticed. Then Mr. Crichton said, rather abruptly:

"You are going away to-morrow, and if I were a wise man I should be glad of it. That I suppose I am not, for I am too sorry to bear it quite in silence, or admire this moonlight, or enjoy the present as I might, for thinking how soon it is to end."

"I do not see why my going should make any difference," said Alberta.

"Possibly not," he answered. "Possibly you do not understand, either, how a man can get to care for a woman so that he cares for little else besides. Forgive me, however, for saying this. I have no right to trouble you. I have not forgotten the commands you laid on me to leave this subject alone. If it had not been for them, I should have much to say to-night—but no doubt you wished them obeyed?"

"Of course I did," answered Alberta.

"And you wish it still?"

"I do."

"Then that is enough for me," said Mr. Crichton, with such a depth of sadness in his voice as he held the gate of the peat-field open for her to pass, that the painful contrast to his merriment with

the children so short a while ago was more than a warm but wilful heart beside him could stand.

"But," began Alberta, and then stopped short, with her face in the moonlight grown suddenly as hot as the peat brands.

"But what?" said Mr. Crichton, gravely, for there had been a few minutes' silence, and his thoughts had been full of gloom.

"But," repeated Alberta, with a ripple of laughter somewhere in her voice, "*supposing there had been no commands*, what was it you would have said?"

"Is that a fair question?" he asked, halting and looking at her in a mixture of surprise and doubt.

"Quite fair," said Alberta, looking anywhere but at him.

"Then I should have asked you once more to be my wife, and to give me love for love, if in ever so small a degree. Your answer, if you please, Miss Graham?" concluded Mr. Crichton, a smile upon his own lips now.

"As you like it, then," said Alberta, steadily, for she knew her own mind and his well at last. And with a fervent "God bless you for that!" Mr. Crichton drew her closer to his side.

Perhaps the moon had never smiled upon a happier pair of lovers since the days when Lorenzo and Jessica paced the avenue at Belmont and bandied similes.

"I never was so glad of anything in all my life," said Mrs. Hinxman, when Mr. Crichton presented his promised bride to her about half an hour later. "Although, why Alberta could not have married you, as I wanted her to, a year ago, is just like her contrary way of doing things. And now," laughing, "thinking it was all over between you, I asked little Jessie Bulteel here, and had quite made up my mind you would fall in love with one another, and my fun is all spoilt!"

"Pray let her come," said Mr. Crichton. "Hearing of it, I too have asked my young nephew to visit me, for I thought they fancied each other at that Militia Ball. She seemed a nice pliant little thing; but for myself, you see, I like the perverse, provoking, wilful woman best."



THE WHITTAKERS GHOST.

THE following ghost story has been told me, word for word, by an eye-witness, and is authenticated by persons of recognized position. G. B. S.

My name is Anna Ducane, and I had two sisters, Helène and Louise. About twenty years ago we lived with our parents on our Canadian farm in the neighbourhood of Montreal, that is to say, within about thirty miles of that city. Our life was a very quiet, uneventful one. From time to time we visited among our neighbours in the country, or spent a few days, shopping and sight-seeing, "in town" with our parents; but our excitements were simple and few, and a brood of ducks would serve us for conversation for a week. It is needful to say we enjoyed perfect health, and were all three of us strong, good-natured, and useful girls, who could turn our hands to most household employments, and a good many outdoor jobs as well—having a rather supercilious contempt of affectation and what we called "fine-ladyism."

All this I mention at the outset, because I wish to show that we were women to whom anything like nerves was unknown. At the time I speak of, Helène and I, who are twins, were nearly two-and-twenty, and Louise was about nineteen.

It was in the end of August that we received an unexpected and delightful invitation to spend some weeks in Montreal, at Whittakers, the house of an old Major Whittaker, who, with his two sisters, resided on a very pretty property on the outskirts of the town. Lucy Whittaker, their niece, had been at school with us in Hamilton, and her return from a visit to Europe was the reason of our invitation to her uncle's house. At first our mother declared she could not think of sending all three of us to stop in a town house; but Lucy wrote and insisted that none should remain behind. There was plenty of space, if we did not mind sharing one big room, like the ward of a hospital, which she was busy preparing for us.

So one evening early in September we found ourselves welcomed to Whittakers by Lucy, looking prettier than ever in a wonderful Parisian dress, the like of which none of us had ever seen. It quite cast into the shade all the elaborate preparations, the flouncings, frillings, and ironings, which had engrossed us all for the last fortnight.

But Lucy was just her own self, despite her smart new wardrobe, and she and Louise became at once as inseparable as they had been at school, while Helène and I fell straightway in love with the old Miss Whittakers, Miss Sara and Miss Hesba. They were different

from any old ladies we had ever known; more refined in looks and manners than our country neighbours, and accomplished in many curious arts which now scarcely survive, such as tambour work, and painting on velvet, and playing the harp. We wanted at once to learn everything they could teach us, and thought that our three weeks' visit would never suffice if we did not begin immediately to be initiated into these mysteries, which were to render us of fresh importance and attractiveness when we should return home.

So we threw ourselves into all sorts of employments with a will, and the days flew by rapidly. Lucy and Louise were generally out of doors together, either in the big, old-fashioned garden behind the house, where they chattered and picked fruit and whispered their secrets by the hour, or in the town itself; sight-seeing and promenading under the protection of a young relation of our hosts', Harry Leroy, who was, like ourselves, visiting Whittakers for the first time.

A word here about Major Whittaker, who, though not wanting in the hospitality and geniality of a host, somehow was very little seen by his visitors: except at eight o'clock, morning and evening, when he regularly read prayers to his assembled household, and at the two meals that followed. He never appeared downstairs, but spent his time in a little study over the porch, where, if the door stood accidentally open, the passer-by might see him hard at work on his life's object, a Harmony of the Four Gospels, over which he had been poring for years. I never knew anything of his past history—how he came by his military title, when he had left the army, or what had given him the very strong and peculiar religious opinions which he held. These opinions were enforced upon the household morning and evening at family prayers, when the Major's long extempore petitions sometimes kept us half an hour at a time upon our knees.

A fortnight of our time at Whittakers had passed very pleasantly, and we were beginning to think, with reluctance, that in another week or so we must be returning home. I mentioned this one afternoon to Miss Hesba as we sat at our painting. She scouted the idea at once, declaring that as long as we cared to stay, and the fine weather continued, we must not think of leaving them.

But even as she spoke, Miss Sara got up and looked anxiously out of the window, for it seemed as if the splendid weather was about to break. Clouds had been creeping up since the morning, and a wet, sounding, whistling wind was beginning to haunt the chimneys, and to rattle the red leaves of the maples.

The two younger girls, and Harry Leroy, came in from the garden, and, to our surprise, old Major Whittaker himself appeared from the regions above, shivering as if with cold. "Shut the windows," he said, "and don't go out any more this evening." For we generally spent the hour before and after prayers and supper in the verandah.

We did not heed his words particularly at the time, and soon he went away to his study again.

We spent the early part of the evening pleasantly enough, part-singing at the piano. Then came prayers and supper as usual, and then, as we recrossed the hall from the dining-room, some one of us suggested that we should go out upon the steps of the front door and watch the storm which was rapidly coming up, and the clouds which dashed across the full moon, hanging like a red globe over the St. Lawrence.

I do not think either host or hostesses saw us, and we had quite forgotten the Major's counsel that we should not go out again that evening. We left the hall-door ajar, and stood out upon the gravel in front of the house, we four girls and young Mr. Leroy.

In order that the following circumstances may be clearly understood, I must explain a little the topography of Whittakers. It was a long, two-storied house, standing a little back from the road which ran into Montreal, and its entrance was not unlike that of many modern English villas. It had two wooden gates, both opening upon the road, which always stood wide, and these were connected by a semicircular sweep of gravel in front of the house, edged with laurels and shrubs. The big garden, orchard, and fields were all behind the house, which in front approached within about fifty yards of the highway. The hall door of Whittakers stood always open during our visit—it was two leaves of battered, weather-stained oak, and on its outside were the marks whence two large knockers had evidently been removed. We had remarked their removal before, and Mr. Leroy had said he supposed the rattle of the knockers had interfered with the Harmony of the Four Gospels in the study above.

As we stood upon the gravel walk we all five distinctly heard the noise of a heavy carriage approaching from the town along the road in front of us, apparently having two, or even four horses, and driven at a great pace. We could not see it for the laurels which intervened between us and the road on either side, but we knew it was rapidly drawing near the gate. Its approach interested us, for it was now nearly ten o'clock, and a visitor at such an hour was unheard of. But if not coming to Whittakers, whither could the carriage be going? for it was the last house of any importance for miles along that way.

We stepped back into the doorway, and found ourselves suddenly caught and dragged in by old Major Whittaker, who, trembling with excitement, and with his queer flowered dressing-gown fluttering round him, as though he had been just aroused from bed, somehow whirled us all into the hall, and banged-to the great leaves of the door with a noise that made the house shake.

But above all the rattle of chains and bars—for the old man was busy securing the door as if for a siege—we heard the approach of the carriage, which, as we expected, turned in at the gate and drew up, with a crack of the whip and a splutter of gravel when the horses were sharply pulled in at the hall steps.

We all five heard it ; and so, I am sure, did Major Whittaker and his sisters, who had also come out into the hall. Not one of us dared say anything, for we were awed by the intensity of excitement which characterised every movement of our host.

A moment afterwards the old door was almost battered in by a furious assault upon it with the iron knocker, and, looking in each other's faces, we all recollected simultaneously that *there was no knocker there*. "Let us pray," said Major Whittaker's voice above the noise. We all knelt down where we were, while he poured forth a long, rambling prayer, in which he entreated to be delivered from some evil and ghostly influence ; but we were all too frightened and excited to listen much. Lucy and Louise were both crying and receiving an undercurrent of consolation from Harry Leroy, while our host prayed on in a high, unnatural tone. The hammering on the front door continued at intervals.

However, these grew longer and longer, and at last the sound ceased altogether. Not so the prayers, for though I was longing to get away to our room, which also looked to the front, to see if the carriage remained at the door, the old Major kept us quite half an hour, without any reference to the usual family worship, which had been punctually performed as usual two hours before.

When at last we retired to our room our first rush, of course, was to the window, but all that was to be seen was the moon riding high in the sky, and the storm clouds sweeping past—no trace of a carriage or its occupants anywhere. Of course we lay awake till morning, discussing the extraordinary event, and Lucy came creeping in to sleep with Louise, too frightened to remain by herself.

I ought to explain that she was almost as much a stranger to Whittakers as we were, having been lately left an orphan to the charge of her uncle, who had at first sent her on a tour with some friends to Europe. Consequently the bombardment of the house by the ghost and the spectre knocker (for we were convinced that what we had heard was supernatural) was as terrible to her as to us.

The next morning it seemed as if all the pleasure of our visit was gone, and—a straw will show which way the wind blows—on some reference being made to our return home, I was struck, but not altogether astonished, to find that no opposition was made to our carrying out our intention, even by Miss Hesba. The two old ladies were evidently miserable and ill-at-ease about something, and though no allusion was made to the occurrence of the night before, it was in all our minds, and rose up between us and all enjoyment.

Our pleasant morning employments were not resumed, for the Misses Whittaker were closeted upstairs with their brother, and we younger ones preferred keeping all together in the garden, where the sun shone and we seemed to be out of the supernatural influence which invested the gloomy old place. Harry Leroy confided to us that he had investigated the front of the house, and that traces of

the wheels of a heavy vehicle and the hoof-marks of a pair of horses were distinctly visible upon the gravel !

By-and-by, when we came in to early dinner, Miss Sara took me aside, and, twisting her watch-guard about in her hands from nervousness, explained that she and her brother thought perhaps it would be better, "under the unfortunate circumstances," that our visit to Whittakers should end as soon as possible. Without actually saying so, she gave me to understand that the annoyance of the previous evening was not by any means over.

I was glad of her plain speaking, for though I did not personally mind the "ghost," as we had already taken to call this disturbing influence, among ourselves, I could not bear the change which had so suddenly fallen upon the previously cheerful household. Besides, I dreaded its effect upon Louise, who was of a very excitable temperament. So I gladly arranged with Miss Sara to have a note ready for my mother, to be sent that afternoon by a special messenger, to prepare her for our unexpected return home, as soon as four disengaged places could be obtained in the stage, which in those days was the means of communication between Montreal and our nearest village. Four places—for I persuaded Miss Whittaker to let us take Lucy with us. I could not bear the idea of leaving the girl companionless, though her aunt said, with a sigh : "Lucy is one of us, and must learn to bear this as we do !"

That night we again all slept together in the big front bed-room. I must mention that I had not told any of the others of Miss Sara's hint that possibly the ghost was not yet laid to rest, for, I thought, we had talked over the matter quite enough. So I incited Lucy to tell us some of her European experiences, and we all went to sleep in the middle of her description of Cologne Cathedral.

We must have slept about two hours or so, when I was awakened by a sharp pinch from Helène, and called out, "What are you doing?" before I opened my eyes. Her answer, "Hush ! it is here in the room !" woke me up thoroughly. I saw her face looking, pale in the dim light, towards the window, a large bow, which occupied the whole end of the room to the right hand of our bed. Louise and Lucy slept in another bed on our left, and consequently further from the window.

I followed the direction of her looks with my eyes, but without stirring, for her words had given me an uncomfortable kind of thrill. There, behind the big dressing-table, which stood in the centre of the bow-window, but well into the room, leaving a considerable space clear behind it, I saw a tall veiled figure, which something told me at once was not human. It was muffled from head to foot in trailing, grey garments, and something was wrapped about its head, but from its long, swinging strides—for it paced to and fro in the little enclosure between window and table—I guessed it to be a male figure, though the garments were womanly, or perhaps monkish.

At first it did not appear to notice us, but presently it began somewhat to slacken its regular walk, and turning its hooded head towards us, seemed to be intently regarding us. My hand was tightly locked in Helène's, and I know the same thought was in both our minds: "What if it comes into the open part of the room, and near either of the beds?"

Suddenly a little gasp from the other bed told us that the other girls were also awake (it was too dark to see their faces), and Louise's voice broke the intense silence. In that Name to which all powers must yield, she commanded it to be gone.

This from Louise, the most timid and nervous of us all! I forgot the ghost in my amazement, and turned to look at her, as she sat up in bed, a trembling little white figure.

A moment after, when I looked to the window, the ghost *was* gone. Louise had exorcised it. She was crying bitterly now, and shaking all over. Helène and I jumped up and crowded round her, patting and soothing her until her sobbing ceased.

"I don't know what put it into my head to do it, I'm sure," she explained; "but I had been looking at the dreadful thing so long: long before any of you woke—and at last I felt I should go mad if I did not speak. I could see his eyes quite plainly, like two lamps, looking me through and through, and I knew it was I who must speak to him."

By-and-by, when we were all a little calmer, I told the girls of Miss Sara's confidence to me, and also of our arrangement to return home as soon as our journey could be settled. Lucy cried out that she could not be left behind, and hugged me when I said that, of course, she was to go with us, for as long as she liked to stay. "I can never come back to this dreadful house," she declared; and would take no comfort from the suggestion, which I had picked up from Miss Sara's conversation, that long intervals, sometimes of years, elapsed between these ghostly visitations.

So the night wore away, and with earliest dawn we were all glad to rise, and get through some of our packing, so as to shorten as much as possible our stay in the haunted bed-chamber.

After breakfast, Helène and I took Miss Whittaker aside, and told her the events of the night. They impressed, but evidently did not astonish her, and her only question when we finished was, "Did the figure attempt to approach any of you?"

"No," I answered; "though Louise declares its face and burning eyes were distinctly turned upon her."

Our hostess sighed, but made no comment, and my twin-sister and I went away upstairs to finish the preparations for our departure, for it was decided we were to leave Whittakers that day at noon. These were soon completed, and Helène and I were about to descend to spend the last hour or two with the old ladies, when Lucy and Louise, who had been round the garden for the last time, rushed up

the oak staircase and into the room, and I saw in a moment, by their disordered looks, that they had seen something more.

Yes, the ghost had again appeared, and the girls were still shaking with nervousness when they told their story.

"It was in the box-walk," said Louise, "and Mr. Leroy was with us. Lucy went away for a few minutes, just as we reached the end, to pick herself some nuts in the shrubbery, and Mr. Leroy began telling me how sorry he was our party was to be broken up, and might he come and see us at home. I said 'of course,' and just then we felt something close behind us (we were standing side-by-side), and thinking it was Lucy, we turned and saw the horrible figure at our elbow, laying a hand upon the arm of each of us! An instant afterwards it was gone, but Lucy, who was coming up from the other end of the walk, had also plainly seen it, its back being towards her; so it was no imagination."

No, it was no imagination. I told the whole story to Miss Whittaker before we left the house. This time the poor old lady broke down completely, and, wringing her hands, accused herself of bringing ruin upon two young lives. Then, seeing my astonishment, she was obliged to explain that it was a sign, too fatally proved to be true, of approaching death, when the veiled figure laid his hand upon any person to whom he chose to show himself. Her words sank like lead into my heart.

There is little more to tell.

Our little Louise fell ill of a strange low fever, soon after our return to the farm, and before Christmas she had left us for ever. Harry Leroy never paid his contemplated visit, for he, too, died, by the accidental discharge of his gun, a few weeks after we parted from him. The only happy consequence of our stay at Whittakers was Lucy's marriage to a neighbour of ours, who wedded her from our house, and by-and-bye took her South, so that for some time we lost sight of her, and heard no news of her relations. When we met again she told us her uncle had died quietly one evening, after completing his life's work—the Harmony of the Four Gospels. Her aunts had shut up the house, which was their own, and had gone to live beyond Hamilton. I never saw them again; nor did I see much more of Lucy, for our own family removed at this time to England, and our Canadian ties were broken.

Whether the curse still lies upon the old house, or whether the house itself still stands, I know not, but the foregoing is a true and unexaggerated account of what we underwent there.

TREASURES.

THE rose, preserved with tender care ;
 The perfumed note ; the tress of hair—
 That speak of boyish folly—
 From cosey depths of easy-chair
 I scan them all with shrugging air
 Of cynic melancholy.
 The “carte de dance ;” the crumpled glove
 The netted purse—“with Polly’s love”—
 (Confound it ! *which* was Polly ?)

The posy ring I gave to Bess,
 When softly came that whispered “Yes,”
 Which seemed a dream of Heaven.
 We turtle-doves were wont to plan
 (On something very small per ann.)
 A dainty cote in Devon.
 Ah, fickle Bess ! she ran away
 With Puller, of the Guards, they say,
 And died in ’57.

A foolscap page of lover’s sighs
 To one whom I apostrophize
 As “stony-hearted Janet.”
 I call the damsel cruel—cold,
 In threadbare terms about as old
 As this decrepit planet.
 Ah, well, those self-same halting rhymes
 Did duty half a dozen times—
 They *all* had hearts of granite !

’Tis sweet to dream of vanished youth,
 Of days long dead and gone—in truth,
 A pleasing occupation !
 Of boyhood’s “fitful fever” o’er ;
 Of follies past—a matter for
 Sincere congratulation !
 So, dusty relics ! with a sigh—
 (An epitaph unspoken)—I
 Consign you to cremation.

Ah, lips of woman !—rosy, ripe,—
 The amber mouth-piece of my pipe
 To me is twice as charming.
 When one arrives at fifty odd,
 The arrows of the archer god
 Have lost their power of harming.
 A wounded heart will ache, no doubt ;
 But *then* one finds a twinge of gout
 A trifle more alarming !



M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

A DISTANT PROSPECT.

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER XXII.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS.

“WHO do you think is here, ma’am, and has sent you these, with her love, and hopes to come and see you this afternoon?”

At the window of a small room in her lodgings near the Lakes, looking out, through clusters of roses, on the fair scenery which makes Grasmere so deservedly a favourite, sat Mrs. Raymond. Her illness in March had left a lingering weakness behind it, for which change of air and scene had been recommended, and they had now been two or three days settled in their pretty lodging, already wearing the aspect of delicate refinement which was essential to the old lady’s comfort, and her faithful attendant Bennet’s peace of mind. There had been a slight shade on Mrs. Raymond’s brow, as she sat there alone with her knitting and her newspaper, her eyes wandering to the far distance, and her thoughts to that which was further still, when Bennet came in to interrupt her, holding out some beautiful water-lilies.

Bennet was triumphant. She had made a discovery. In a furnished house not very far off, little Miss Stormount was staying, with Miss Granard and Sir Marcus and Miss Combermere—quite a cheerful party—and Bennet had met them. The dear child had known her directly, and so had the little dog, which could run now like another, Bennet added: and it was the little lady who had given her the flowers for dear Mrs. Raymond, and Miss Granard had given her card and said they hoped to call, and see their kind friend again.

"Very pretty and pleasant they both were, I'm sure," wound up Bennet, "and seemed to think so much of the little I could do for them, I felt quite ashamed it hadn't been more."

"I hope you told them I should be glad to see them here, Bennet."

"I did, ma'am. And, as I knew you would wish to know how the little lady had been lately, after all she went through, I spoke to Charles, who was leading Miss Emily's pony. He told me they were very anxious about her at one time, but she seemed now to have taken a turn for the better, and was growing stronger: and he says, ma'am, she is wonderfully clever in some things. The child spoke up, quite cheerful, when Miss Granard asked something about the flowers: and her face, altogether, looks rounder and rosier, poor little lady, than when you gave her to me off the Christmas-tree, ma'am."

Mrs. Raymond smiled. "And how is Miss Granard looking, Bennet?—I know she is one of your beauties."

"Well, ma'am, I did take the liberty of looking at her, when she was talking to Miss Combermere, and I must say it was such a pleasure, that I couldn't help wishing——" Here Bennet checked herself, and became absorbed in the arrangement of the water-lilies.

"Wishing what? Anything I can do for you?" asked her mistress, moving restlessly on her chair.

"Oh, ma'am, it is not for me to propose such a thing. It was what you said before we left home that put it into my head—when you were talking of the heat and smoke of London being bad for Mr. Ernest Archdale."

"Ah, that is what you are thinking of," returned Mrs. Raymond with a half sigh, and she said no more. But Bennet thought it a good sign that her mistress turned to her portfolio, and sat musing over the last letters from her daughter and grandson, as if weighing some difficult question in her mind.

By-and-by, her young friends came, according to promise, to pay their visit. It was a real pleasure on both sides, and when Emily, attracted by the roses, had gone out into the porch with Bennet, Adela Granard was able to give her kind old friend some satisfactory information about the child's progress.

Charles had expressed it accurately: Emily had certainly taken a turn for the better, and was beginning to do credit to the skill of her physician, Sir Marcus Combermere. They had had some weeks of anxious watching, but, as Sir Marcus said, they had to wait till nature made the necessary effort, and her youth being in her favour, that effort had been made. She was growing fast, and her nerves and brain were in a more healthy condition. Every day that passed without anything to cause dangerous excitement, was pure gain; and either that enemy, her stepfather, had other objects in view, or despaired of success in an attempt against her peace, for she was

left quite undisturbed. Of the trouble and labour her affairs brought to her guardian, Miss Granard, Emily of course knew little or nothing. Regular hours, cheerful companionship, and as much employment as she seemed able to enjoy, had already laid the foundation of wholesome habits, on which Adela hoped to rear a good education, though diffidence of her own powers and judgment made her proceed with the utmost caution at every step. Emily had learned little regularly; and was very soon tired when a subject did not interest her; on one she liked she would willingly bestow any amount of labour. While it was a hard matter to coax her through the rudiments of arithmetic, she learned pages of poetry by heart, appreciating the sublime and beautiful without knowing why; and though she wearied of anything like the routine of lessons, she would pore over the volumes in the Archdeacon's library, in search of information about bird, beast, or flower, that many a clever school-girl would have pronounced too dry for amusement. One great thing was, they kept *fear* from her.

The image of her mother—no longer suffering and harassed, but resting in peace and safety, as she was taught to trust and believe—was treasured in her heart's innermost shrine as sacred and precious; only to be spoken of with Adela. From Adela nothing was reserved; and whatever she taught was accepted without a question; but as Emily's imagination cleared itself from the influences that had troubled it, the colours it threw on the truths she learned to believe, were vivid enough to startle her teacher. Questions and comments, that seemed beyond her years, first filled Adela with gladness, and then with anxiety; and the dread of making a mistake in the difficult task of education drove her frequently for advice to her elder counsellors, the Archdeacon and Sir Marcus. Each gave it from his own point of view; but in substance it was much the same, and Adela followed it carefully. Without throwing the young imagination back on itself for want of sympathy, she tried to keep her from the dangers of self-contemplation by making every glow of feeling an impulse to some kind action. She roused in her mind the ambition of being a helper of others; and they seemed to open a new world of pleasure to Emily. The day was too short for all she had to do and think of; and night brought her healthful rest, such as she had not known for many months. The present temporary change to Grasmere had been suddenly undertaken for Emily's sake alone; and her delight in it was great. They had not anticipated the additional pleasure of falling in with their kind friend, Mrs. Raymond.

That the pleasure was mutual there could be no doubt. While Adela, encouraged by Mrs. Raymond's looks of sympathy and interest, talked of her ward, the old lady was thinking of the guardian, and her eyes rested on the lovely face and form with an increased approval of the mind that dwelt within. "My boy has not given his heart away unworthily," she thought, "and if I could

see him blessed with such a wife as this, I should feel I had only one thing left to desire—the one thing I may never hope to obtain.”

Perhaps it was because he was in the minds of both that neither of them mentioned Ernest Archdale, except casually. Emily ran in; Bennet brought in tea and cake; and the conversation turned on the walks and drives in the neighbourhood. All of them were so familiar to Mrs. Raymond, that she could suggest pretty little expeditions in plenty. When pressed to join in them, however, she hung back, and could only be brought to say that perhaps in two or three days, when she had a new walking-stick, she might feel more equal to it.

“A new walking-stick!” exclaimed Adela: and the old lady nodded.

As it happened, however, the weather became stormy that night, and long expeditions were out of the question; and by the time sunshine returned, the walking-stick waited for, arrived by train. No other than Ernest Archdale.

“For an old woman, I am a very unwise one,” Mrs. Raymond observed to Bennet; “and for a sensible, practical woman, you are singularly silly. But the thing is done, and he is come; now, on Napoleon’s principles, we must stand by it. Napoleon always maintained that an error persisted in became wisdom in the eyes of posterity. Let us hope ours may have as good success.”

Her invitation to her grandson to come and cheer her loneliness, written on the evening after Adela’s visit, had only hinted to Ernest that he would find friends in the place who would be glad to see him; but his imagination supplied the rest. It decided his plans at once, to the no small discomfiture of other people’s. His having been nursed at Mrs. Bourne’s had given him a footing of intimacy in the family, and it had been the business of Miss Wilmot’s life since to reconcile his mother and her own irascible guardian; and she had so far succeeded, after sundry failures, that Mrs. Archdale had been formally invited to join the party in their annual visit to Folkestone. Apartments had been secured in one of the best situations, and as Miss Medicott was still kind enough to favour them with her society, and required sea air as much as anyone, there was less difficulty in bringing Mr. Bourne to see that an additional companion might be an advantage. Even the prospect of an occasional quarrel was to him more enlivening than the continual topic of Miss Medicott’s sufferings and patience.

Mrs. Archdale accepted all the civilities shown to her with sufficient moderation to maintain her dignity; in her secret soul she chafed at the necessity of conciliation, while longing to turn it to account. The ladies were to go down first, and Mr. Bourne and Ernest to follow—the latter being promised a month’s holiday—as soon as some business had been got through which would till then detain his chief. This arrangement had been made without his

being consulted, and he had all along asserted that his going was uncertain; but his mother was confident of carrying the point, till Mrs. Raymond's letter fell on her hopes like a thunderbolt. To oppose a wish of the grandmother's would have been a breach of duty not to be named; but it was hard to see her boy's face flush, and to hear by the tremulous tones in which he tried to speak indifferently, that his pulse was leaping with gladness at the prospect before him.

All objections on the score of expense were overruled by the enclosure of a little slip of grey paper, which was down in Mrs. Raymond's account-book as the price of a walking-stick; and the only resource left to Mrs. Archdale was to show herself unselfish and make it clearly understood that her comfort and pleasure were entirely secondary considerations. So long as he and her dear mother were happy together, that was all she wished. She would make the best of it to their hospitable entertainers: only the chances were they might take his absence as a slight.

"And visit it upon you, mother—that would never do. I cannot see why I may not please all parties, by going down to the dear granny first, and joining you later. Depend upon it, I shall be much more welcome and much more agreeable if I am not with you too long. If only I could have you with me at Grasmere! What do you say? Could you go?"

"Oh no, no! it is not to be thought of. The offence to the Bournes would be mortal; and it would be unkind to that poor dear girl, Cecilia, who has built her hopes upon my going with them. But Ernest, my mother wants you directly, you see: how can you get leave so soon?"

"I'll try the old gentleman the first opportunity, and perhaps I can bring him round," said Ernest, whose thin face was quivering with eagerness; an eagerness which made all obstacles appear rather as grass to be trampled upon than as fences to turn him back. He took Mr. Wing into his confidence, obtained the promise of his support, and then boldly went in to Mr. Bourne and asked if he could not be spared a few days sooner to visit his grandmother. On a little demur being raised on account of the work that had to be cleared off, he at once volunteered to work double tides; and this being conceded, he went off to his counsellor at the chemist's, with whom he had had dealings several times that summer. Mr. Cloud, the dispenser, always received him in a back room, and seemed to know by intuition what he wanted.

"You must give me something this time that will keep me awake, and put my brain in first-rate working order," was the patient's statement of his case. And the appeal was so well responded to, that all were amazed at Mr. Archdale's energy and quickness during the next two days of unceasing labour: from which he was released in time to start for the Lakes by the night train.

He reached Grasmere when his grandmother was at breakfast.

Repudiating all suggestions about going to bed, he took his place at the table in excellent spirits, talking of London, and public news, and the pictures of the year, and such topics as are peculiarly acceptable to those at a distance from the scene of action; talking volubly. But Bennet, as she waited on them both, was not long in detecting his want of appetite, though she tried one thing after another, as far as her limited larder would allow. He was too excited to please her; and there was a look about his eyes she had never seen before. Faithful Bennet was puzzled. Perhaps it was the heat of London, or the fatigue of the journey; but if it had been anybody but Mr. Ernest, she would have declared he was in the habit of taking stimulants—something or other that was doing him no real good.

His grandmother, whose sight was not so keen, or who was too glad at heart to be so observant, only noticed that he made a poor breakfast, and set that down to fatigue. So she refrained from lamentations, promising herself that he would make amends when he had rested body and spirit a little, and she despatched a pencil note to Sir Marcus Combermere.

“My walking-stick is come; I challenge the Woods and Forests to find me such another. Bring one of your ladies to luncheon, and judge for yourself.”

“Where is that going to?” asked Ernest, as he saw the note delivered to Bennet.

“A little business of mine, my dear,” was all the answer till the missive was fairly gone. Then she told him its purport: a young lady was coming.

He looked almost dismayed, and turned to the glass. “How do I look, granny? Is there anything amiss with me?”

“Vain youth! Is it your own appearance you are thinking of at such a moment?”

“I should think it was, when eyes like Sir Marcus Combermere’s are to pass judgment upon it. However, I must take my chance; it is too late now. Granny, what should you say if we actually found the dowry, after all?”

“Don’t, my boy. It is a subject I do not trust myself to joke about.”

“I mean no joke; it is quite beyond that to me.”

“Then what is the use of talking about what is gone, when you know, as well as I do, that everything has been tried to trace it, and no clue ever found in all these years? If there had been a chance, do you think I would have thrown it away?”

“Do you ever dream about it, granny?”

“I have dreamt of it often, my dear; and been quite ashamed when I woke, to think how silly my dreams had been. But my waking ones are not much wiser, I am afraid.”

“You may live to see them all realised. They shall be, if I live, and keep my senses. Have I been talking nonsense all this time?”

"No, my boy ; only you seem full of something that excites you. Why did you ask about my dreams ?"

"Because *I* have begun to dream, regularly, consistently, about the discovery we want ; and I have just a ray of hope that it may lead to the truth."

"What makes you so suddenly eager about it, Ernest ? I remember how you used to laugh at my castles in the air ! now you seem to be building at a rate I never attained to in my liveliest days. What says your dear mother to your dreams ?"

"My mother has quite enough with the day's realities ; I do not trouble her with the visions of the night. But it is for her sake, in the main, that I want to strike a vein of gold—to release her from worries, and make a home where she will be always the first object, and where she must be happy, if the presence of an angel can give happiness. Do you suppose it is for my own pleasure I am boxed up in old Bourne's counting-house day after day, granny, with the prospect of doing it for years to come ?"

But all this was so unlike himself, that his grandmother grew uneasy, and tried to change the conversation. Without success at first. He went on talking more and more vehemently, and dropping hints about his dreams and their meaning ; it so distressed her at last, that she rang the bell for Bennet, under pretence of giving an order. Bennet felt more alarmed than her mistress. At length he was induced to lie down on the sofa, and keep quiet ; and, once there, he soon fell asleep.

Sir Marcus called before he woke, and Mrs. Raymond received him in the garden, that she might confide to him this new uneasiness. He listened with his usual kindness, making no comment till she had finished ; when he quietly asked what the discovery meant, which the poor boy had been dreaming about.

"That is a story that could not be told you now, Sir Marcus ; I must feel quite sure of my own nerves and courage when I begin to tell it. I know, beforehand, what you will say. You will point out, as others have done, the extreme folly of thinking about it at all."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Raymond, if I object to your taking for granted anything I may say, before I have said it. My opinions are my own, and even you cannot guess them beforehand."

"You are right ; I ought to have known better. But there is not time now for my history. You must come in and take luncheon, and look at my dear boy, without letting him find out I have spoken to you. I have great hopes that fresh air and charming society may, after all, be his best cure."

"He shall have as much of it as we can give him," said Sir Marcus.

Sir Marcus had intentionally come alone, for Bennet had dropped a hint that Mr. Ernest was not himself, and he was anxious to see him quietly. The young man's sleep had done him good, and when

Mrs. Raymond brought in her visitor, Ernest was ready to receive him in a more natural manner. Mrs. Raymond's eyes, however, were watching Sir Marcus's face, and she saw, or thought she saw, a slight change pass over it as he looked at her grandson. It was just a momentary contraction of the brows, as if he saw something that displeased him; and it was gone before she could feel sure she had not been mistaken. Sir Marcus said very little about the young man's health—not more than it would have been unkind to omit. He talked of Grasmere, and made him cordially welcome to join their proposed excursions; which had been only waiting for the fine weather. And that Ernest seemed to have brought with him.

"As you seem to have recovered your walking powers, you will not be afraid of a picnic," said Sir Marcus. "We have a pony for Emily, and you can make interest with Charles for a lift now and then."

Ernest observed, by way of answer, that he really owed something to the twist he had given himself when getting out of Mrs. Bourne's carriage. The treatment Cloud had used had done him more good than any he had tried before. Since he had been able to get about at all, he had suffered less from his lameness, which he attributed entirely to Cloud's cleverness. He had affronted the family doctor by refusing to see him—his little dispenser was the handiest fellow he had ever met.

Sir Marcus put a question or two to this, and elicited a few facts. He then turned the conversation by asking Ernest whether he had heard anything of Paul Rocket.

"Not since the Archdeacon called on me in London, and told me Paul had to serve out his time with his old master. But twice lately I have fancied I saw him—once in Hyde Park, and once in the street; and each time it looked as if he were watching me: but before I could make sure of him, he vanished."

"If he is in London, we may be sure of one thing—that his master is there too."

"I believe he is. I hear that he is being consulted by people, and is giving extraordinary answers. He is said to be only accessible at night: no one knows what he does by day."

"Where did you learn this, Archdale?"

"From my clever dispenser: who really ought to write himself M.D."

"Has he recommended your consulting the Professor?"

"Oh, no; he only talked of him as a remarkable man, whatever his principles might be. And really the things he describes must be worth looking into, if only for their cleverness. Cloud says I should be surprised to know how much influence Professor Dangerfield and some one or two others have—how many people consult them secretly, while pretending to laugh at them in public."

"I can quite believe it; it always has been so, and, I suppose,

always will be," said Sir Marcus, drily; and, the luncheon being ready, they sat down to it.

Whether from fatigue, or from breakfasting late, did not appear, but the watchful eyes of the visitor noticed how little appetite the young man had brought from London, and on speaking of it, heard that it had failed him some time.

"We must remedy that, Mrs. Raymond, by fresh air and gentle exercise," was his comment to the old lady; but when he could get Bennet alone for a moment, he spoke more plainly.

"Have you noticed any special thing in Mr. Archdale to make you uneasy? You are a born nurse, so I can rely on your observation," he said.

"Indeed, Sir Marcus, I have," was the woman's answer. "I said to myself this morning, that if it had been anybody but Mr. Ernest Archdale, I should have thought he had been taking something."

"Depend upon it, he does take something; and you must find out what it is. Say nothing to your mistress, or to him, but watch your opportunity, and, whatever it is, let me have a look at it. Unless I am very much mistaken, he has got into dangerous hands."

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN EASEDALE.

"I HOPE this is doing as I would be done by," thought Kate Combermere as she sat down on a slab of mossy rock, with a basket on her knee; in which a tin box, some sheets of blotting-paper, and two or three phials, with air holes in their corks, were stored for the benefit of the museum. Dandie, panting for breath, his feathery paws and long nose brown with mould, lay at her feet, recovering from a frantic assault on a rabbit hole, whence he had been dragged off with difficulty, and to which he was privately scheming to return. Coco, having been beguiled into sharing the forbidden sport, had found it so charming, though his share had been principally barking outside, that he sat with undisguised impatience watching Emily's movements, as she wandered among the trees and stones, searching for curiosities; while Adela was sketching at some little distance, Ernest Archdale by her side. He knew more about sketching than she did, and was anxious she should improve, so part of this day's ramble was to be devoted to art as well as to science; and the beauties of Easedale had beguiled them into going further than they had intended. He was still rather dependent on his good stick, and, as much on his account as on her own, Miss Granard had proposed a halt at a favourable spot: and after seeing the drawing fairly begun, Kate had followed the impulse of good-natured sympathy, which made her carry Emily higher up the hill, to see what they could find.

Doing as you would be done by is always a good thing; but it

implies a chance of reciprocity, and this was not at that moment very likely to occur. But that, as Kate argued, made it all the more meritorious on her part; and having stipulated with Emily that all insects should be well corked down, and moderation observed in the size of mineral treasures, patiently undertook to carry the basket, and to assume an interest in its contents. Her interest, in reality, lay with her friends below; and perhaps with some thoughts of another, whose absence was the only drawback to the success of their excursion.

Whether Mrs. Raymond was right or wrong in calling herself unwise, is not for us to determine; but one thing she could not help seeing—she had given her boy a great deal of happiness. It might be the worse for him afterwards—no one could tell—but the present was all a dream of bliss, the more tranquil that his love was as yet undeclared. The intimacy of friendship made all easy; and the absence of self-consciousness on Adela's part enabled him to enjoy the gladness her presence gave, without troubling his head about the future. To speak of love in his circumstances would be, he told himself, a mockery: but to feel every hour of the day that she was growing more and more the very life of his life—that was the most natural thing in the world, and the only wonder was, how he had passed so many years without her. And though he did not speak in actual words, his heart was too much in earnest not to find language of look, and gesture, and involuntary action, which betrayed his secret over and over again, and did his cause no harm. Kate Combermere, who watched them both with great interest, became convinced that Adela, whether aware of Mr. Archdale's passion or not, was not insensible to the attraction of his society. Her face would brighten at the sound of his voice, and the double burden of sadness and responsibility, beneath which she so often looked oppressed, was either lightened by his sympathy, or made easier to bear by the stimulus of a new, mysterious joy—coming upon her in glimpses, like a wonderful view, seen through the gaps of a thick wood. They were happy together, and Kate loved to see them so, though she asked herself more than once how it would end. What would his mother think? what would Cecilia Wilmot do? This last query was the hardest to solve. The possibility of Cecilia's seeking for consolation where Kate least wished her to find it, would cross her mind, let her resolve against it as she might; blotting out the beauty of the landscape, and darkening the summer sky.

"Come, Emily, the dogs want another run," she called out, at last, when she could be still no longer. "Let us follow the path, and try if we can reach the tarn. We shall be back again before that sketch is finished."

Emily complied with her habitual docility; and the basket having received a few more contributions, they pursued their way, energetically at first, but the distance proving longer than Kate expected, their pace slackened considerably, and more than once Miss Combermere

debated whether they ought not to turn back. She beguiled the way with the touching story of Agnes Green, waiting for the father and mother who were never to return, and watching over the little ones to whom she was to supply the place of both. So intense was Emily's interest in the "ower true tale," in which some of our most powerful writers have found choice material for their eloquence, that she looked neither to the right nor to the left, but walked on mechanically, without seeing her path, or the prospect beyond it.

"And she was only a girl like me, and was such a comfort to the others!" was her first remark, when the narrator paused.

"Yes. You see what even weak girls can do, when they have something weaker still depending upon them."

"It must be very nice to take care of people. I suppose the kind good spirits *like* doing it."

"We are quite sure of that, Emily; and they like to see us brave and faithful, and ready to do our duty."

"Miss Combermere, when people are rich, they can do a great deal more than when they are poor, can't they?"

"In some ways they can—whatever is in the power of money. But money will not do everything."

"I am very glad I shall be rich. I thought I should be rather poor."

"What made you think so?"

"Poor mamma used to say, when she was unhappy, you know, that I must learn to do with a very little, and that she wished she had never had more than I should have when I grew up."

"Did she never explain why that would be so?"

"No; she only cried over papa's picture, and said I should have her work to do, as well as my own. I suppose she meant about giving away, because she hardly ever had anything to give."

"Perhaps so," said Kate, but she was struck by what she heard, and began to ponder it. Suddenly Dandie stopped short, pricked up his ears, and having taken a good look at two approaching figures, tore across the turf to greet them. And Kate Combermere stood in utter astonishment, wondering if she might believe her eyesight. We must account for their presence there.

Late on the previous evening, as Archdeacon Burleigh was lingering over his cup of tea, and perseveringly reading by the fading twilight, to avoid the necessity of a lamp and closed windows, a loud ring, and a cheery voice at the door announced a visitor—no other than Lewis Frankland. Having had business to transact in the neighbourhood, and not caring for the Court when his friends were away, he had come to see if Mrs. Keith could give him a bed. An offer of supper being warmly accepted, he soon proved that the term's work had not impaired his powers, and he was too hungry, and too intent on his own matters at first, to notice any change in his host. When, however, the lights were brought, and he had leisure to look about him, he was struck by the comparatively subdued manner of his old friend, as well as by

the touch of increased age on his features and form since they had parted after the Christmas holidays. So hale and powerful had been Mr. Burleigh's frame, that it was difficult to think of him then as an elderly man ; and Lewis could not help asking if he had been unwell ?

"Unwell ? I am never unwell. I leave that to young fellows like Archdale, who cannot live without his doctor and his drugs. You know he has joined them at Grasmere ?"

"No, I had not heard of his good luck. The more the merrier. I hope to be there myself to-morrow, and I should like to make you walk with me."

"As a specimen pupil ? Well, I am not too old to learn. I have had a strange lesson since I saw you. There, light your pipe ; there are no young ladies upstairs to be annoyed ; and I have something meanwhile to tell you."

Profiting by the invitation, Lewis leaned back luxuriously, with his eyes on his host, more and more convinced that he was either suffering in body, or troubled in mind. In either case, the situation was remarkable, for the Archdeacon counselled many, but, as a rule, took advice from none.

"In your profession, Frankland, you must meet with endless variety of natures ; you don't treat them all alike, I imagine ?"

"Not when I have time to discriminate. In a general way, they must fare alike, but where I can, I vary my treatment."

"Are you ever fairly puzzled ?"

"Indeed I am. I have kicked up the lazy, and browbeaten the bully, and coaxed-on the shy, and turned the laugh against the impudent ; but the fellow I cannot deal with is one who either never sees, or never can bring himself to own, that he can say or do wrong."

"And that very boy is one who will lord it over the others, and ranks as a Sir Oracle in their eyes. The case is harder still, no doubt."

"In such a case, the only chance for him is a good downcome before them all."

"I understand. Now, as a judge of character, should you say *I* was a hot-tempered man ?"

The young schoolmaster was so startled, he had not a word to say. He took the pipe from his mouth, and stared at his host.

"Never mind, Dominie," said the latter, with a smile, "your silence is answer enough. I am of an irritable temperament, and what it has cost me no one knows. But if you mean to take me as a pupil in the holidays, you ought to know the worst."

"My dear Archdeacon——"

"My dear fellow, never stop man or boy when he is trying to make a confession. Depend upon it, some of those lads that have puzzled you would have been thankful from the bottom of their hearts could anyone have driven out the dumb spirit that would not let them own the truth. I have cast mine behind me at this moment—let me speak, while I can."

"I am all attention, sir; I only hope you mean to tell me there is something I can do for you."

"There may be; that I cannot say at present. You are fond of Kate Combermere, Lewis?"

"I should think I was! Who could help it?"

"It would be a dark day for her father to lose her. Not by seeing her happy in the home that would be always open to him; but snatched from him by the folly, the ignorance, the conceit of a man who ought to have known better—as my poor girl was from me!"

Lewis was silent; he had heard Sir Marcus once mention that great sorrow of his old friend's life—the early death of a favourite niece; but he did not know the details, and the emotion of his host was evidently so deep, that he feared to increase it by remark or enquiry.

"She was my sister's child," he went on, making an effort to speak calmly, "and when her mother died, she clung to me—no wonder. Her father and I had never been friends, for I could not approve of the marriage, and he would have kept me out of his house if I had not been of use to him. My confession has nothing to do with that part of the story—he is dead too, and all that is past and done with. But when Lilla was taken ill, she was attended by a man of the name of Mowatt, in whom her father chose to put great faith, and whom I distrusted. He was known as a clever fellow, but rash, and self-confident—without much experience, and always trying new theories. He tried them once too often—and he killed my poor girl."

"Did not Sir Marcus attend her at the last?"

"I took him there on my own responsibility, when no one would listen to my arguments and entreaties; and I forced my way into her room, with him behind me. Only his love for me would have taken him there; but he did all man could do. It was too late; and, that it was so, was owing to Mowatt's treatment."

"Did Mowatt own as much?"

"He? He maintained that he had been right all along, and that Sir Marcus had done the mischief. Words passed between us such as I never had with any man before or since, and which on my part was a heavy breach of duty. I own it—I make no excuse to you or myself; but at the time, my chief feeling was for the narrow escape I had had in not touching him. I have never seen him since, except in my dreams. Laugh at me if you like—it sounds ridiculous enough in an old man—but there have been nights when I have woken in an agony of horror, believing the temptation had come upon me at last, and I had struck him down. I thought all this was quite over, as I heard nothing of the man—except a report that he was dead."

"And how do you know he is not dead?"

"You shall hear. The case of my poor Lilla made a stir at the time, and though Mowatt's supporters carried him through, it was not forgotten later, when there was a question about his treatment of some hospital patients. Combermere had to give an opinion, and

it was so decidedly against him that he lost his appointment and his practice, and disappeared altogether. When I went over to Ostend on the affairs of that child Emily's succession, I found her mother had been attended by a doctor of the name of Mowatt, and that he was suspected by her friend, Miss Joseph, of having made away with a packet of papers. With a dogged resolution, wonderful in an elderly woman, Miss Joseph had been, ever since, on the watch for his return. I at once resolved to watch with her, and satisfy myself that it was the same man."

The Archdeacon paused a few moments. And then, resuming his narrative, he described the scene in which he had been an actor at the house of the Professor.

"I am not ashamed to say that the victory was Dangerfield's," he added. "I was struck dumb at the moment, and could not have defended myself to save my life. It was only too true that I had never forgiven the man, and that was in itself a breach of the commandment, though I had never done him an injury. We left the house without exchanging another word with its master, and I will not speak of the night that followed. It resulted in this—I felt convinced Mowatt had seen me, and was near at hand; and I would find him, cost me what it might. I stayed there a fortnight, but to no purpose. We watched and enquired everywhere, but could discover nothing."

"Well, sir, and have you heard anything since?"

"Yes; I hear from Sir Marcus that Archdale has been letting a man prescribe for him whose plan is so like Mowatt's that he feels convinced his hand is in the matter. What you talked of as a joke, I had been planning in earnest—to go off to Grasmere and speak to Archdale myself."

Frankland was delighted. "We will go together, sir," he said. "Excuse my asking one question: what should you do, now, if you met your enemy?"

"Offer to shake hands with him: which he would most likely decline. I came to that conclusion at the Professor's door."

The conversation after this took a more ordinary turn; the Archdeacon himself seemed bent on recovering his usual tone and manner, as if almost ashamed of having required and invoked sympathy. When they wished each other good-night it was with a mutual agreement to pack their knapsacks for an early start; and having that in view, Lewis Frankland would, under other circumstances, have fallen fast asleep the instant his head touched his pillow.

On the present occasion, however, he found himself most inconveniently broad awake. His old friend's story had interested and excited him; but it was not on those details that his mind was fixed. One sentence spoken casually, and replied to without hesitation, had left an impression behind that kept him awake, communing with his own thoughts.

"You are fond of Kate Combermere, Lewis?"

It was a very simple thing to say : half question, half assertion of a fact; and he had not had the slightest difficulty in returning assent as a matter of course. As he had said himself, how could he help being fond of her? She was the tried friend of childhood, boyhood, manhood; her home had always been his, as far as welcome and intimacy could make it so; he looked up to her father as to a kinsman, and to her he felt he could carry every hope, or fear, or desire, or perplexity, that a man would take to his sister or his mother, for sympathy and advice. Fond of Kate, indeed! It was like asking a fellow if he liked fine weather, fresh air, and a springy turf, for a walk on a summer's day! He was so accustomed to her friendship and welcome, that he looked upon them as peculiarly his own—nobody in the world could be supposed to have, or hope to have, any right to come between them, or distract her attention and regard from him, when he claimed his due. And yet, as he turned the matter over in the silence of the night, a strange emotion followed on the track of that plain question. How could he depend upon the durability of this state of things? Supposing anyone did step in between them, and he lost his place; subsiding into the main body of friends, who have no special claim, and desire nothing beyond it; how would life look then? And if he turned from the contingency as if it implied ill-treatment, even to robbery, what had he ever done to prevent it? Had he seriously looked the future in the face, ever?—or only enjoyed the present, without aiming at more? He could not answer these queries to his own satisfaction; and, at last, too restless to bear it any longer, struck a light, and opened his pocket-book in quest of two or three small notes, delicately scented, and written in a lady-like hand.

They were not important documents; anyone might read them, as he said to himself when he took them out; but there was a degree of tenderness in the manner with which he unfolded the thick paper with its illuminated monogram, and spread it on his strong, sun-burnt palm, that might not have been shown by an ordinary reader. The first was as follows :—

“DEAR MR. FRANKLAND,—A discussion arose at dinner yesterday among some of the company, more wealthy than wise, as to the derivation of the enclosed words. Knowing nothing about it, I, of course, boldly expressed an opinion, which was not received as it ought to have been. You have all these matters at your fingers' ends: extend the tips of them to me for once, and secure my deepest gratitude by enabling me to prove I am right.

“Yours most sincerely,

“CECILIA WILMOT.”

“I had to write and tell her she was wrong,” he said, as he re-folded the note; “but she took it good-humouredly enough.” He turned to the next in date :—

"LEARNED AND DEAR SIR,—Have you a vacancy for a backward pupil of whom all England has despaired? I never felt so utterly prostrated in spirit as after reading your terrible reply; and to school I must go—after the latter Lammas holidays, unless you should be coming to town, and could try what a little verbal instruction could do, during the peaceful hour of luncheon.

"Yours, in floods of tears,

"CECILIA WILMOT."

"There is not much in that, but she writes a pretty hand. Here is the third."

"DEAR MR. FRANKLAND,—Mrs. Bourne has begged me to find out if you are to be in town for the University cricket-match. Never having been to either University, and knowing as much of cricket as of derivations, of course we are bound to be at Lord's in a state of great enthusiasm, and I am to ask if you will return with us to dinner at seven?

"In great haste, yours sincerely,

"C. WILMOT."

"That was an aggravating business, because I could not go, and the match was splendid. Then comes this last."

"DEAR MR. FRANKLAND,—We are to spend some weeks at Folkestone for our health, and as I want to improve my mind as well, can you recommend any work, not too dry or difficult, on sea-side natural history? A line addressed as below will find yours gratefully (provided the book does not send her to sleep),

"CECILIA WILMOT."

"Very desirable that a lady should improve her mind, and I hope she will read the book I recommended. But I doubt it; she likes to play with knowledge, not to make it her own. Poor girl! I fancy she is devoted to Archdale, and whenever he is ungracious, it is some comfort to amuse herself with me. I cannot think why he is so indifferent, unless she has amused herself a little too often. Not unlikely, pretty and amiable as she is. I wonder what Kate thinks about it, and whether Archdale is to blame? If he has treated her badly, no wonder he goes in for quack doctoring to quiet his conscience. I'll have it out with him somehow or other, and see if I cannot do the girl a good turn. I am not such a puppy, I hope, as to suppose she cares for me. If I were ——"

What would have happened in such a case is not exactly clear; but after replacing the notes in his pocket-book, the exercise seemed to have refreshed his spirits, and Mr. Lewis Frankland soon fell asleep.

With the early dawn, the Archdeacon and Frankland began their walk to Grasmere. Intending to take short cuts, they took long ones, made some wrong turnings, and found themselves on Easedale by a happy accident, to the intense surprise of their friends.

However, nobody could find fault with their being there, least of all Miss Combermere, the radiance in whose face, as she came to meet them, brought back Lewis's midnight musings with renewed force. It *was* very pleasant to be so welcomed, let one turn up when and where one might; and the Archdeacon was not far wrong—it would be very difficult to forgive anyone who even thought to appropriate Kate. Frankland felt that he could not spare her for a moment, especially in the holidays. And if a doubt had ever saddened Kate's spirits as to the amount of return he made for the liberal outpouring of her friendship for him, his greeting that day must have reassured her.

He looked happy; and the happiness was contagious. While Emily was monopolizing the Archdeacon with the contents of her basket, and discussing the names and classes of all her plants and minerals, Lewis and Kate were chatting gaily of everything that had happened since they last met, and exchanging confidences about their pursuits and mutual acquaintances, with an ease and enjoyment which neither could have assumed had they not been real. The Archdeacon, without appearing to notice them, observed it all, and smiled a little to himself, though not without a sigh.

"They are happy to meet, and their intimacy is a pleasure to both. If they were less intimate, and less openly happy, I should have no doubt whatever."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DISTANT PROSPECT.

A LITTLE learning may be a dangerous thing; but it has this advantage, despite the danger—that it shows you, better than any amount of ignorance, what it is you do not know.

Adela Granard possessed just enough knowledge of drawing to be alive to her own defects, and grateful for the counsel of taste and experience; especially when offered by so good a draughtsman as Mr. Archdale. As he told her, she only needed instruction to make rapid progress; and being at once quick of apprehension and docile under guidance, the sketching at first progressed rapidly, with very fair success. And while her eyes were bent on landscape or paper, those of her instructor could rest elsewhere.

We have alluded before to her remarkable beauty. She never looked lovelier than on this day, when, with her cares and griefs for awhile laid aside, she could freely give herself up to the enjoyment of nature; and her serenity was heightened, perhaps unconsciously, by the charm of a companionship that was fated, from that day, to take rank above all else. How soon, or in what precise form, that truth asserted itself, we are not prepared to affirm. The golden age had come upon them when least looked for; silent and unacknowledged

in the snow and frost at Comber Court, it broke upon their view in the sweet sunlight of that summer holiday ; and when Ernest, in the low, passionate tones of intense feeling, essayed to teach the art which is as old in immortal youth as nature's self, it was with trembling joy she received the lesson, wondering, almost with awe, that such happiness should have been in store for her, after all her pains and troubles.

The stillness and sweetness around them harmonised with the quiet gladness which settled down in their hearts, when once their eyes had met in full, undoubting confidence of being mutually beloved ; and if a tear or two did dim her eyes, and blister her drawing, as she remembered what this might have been to her own dead, and never now could be—there was, at least, no repining, no unthankfulness for the strange new wealth of love given her in the place of the old.

It is very probable that neither realised, just then, how remote was the prospect of their union—how many obstacles must be overcome before it could even be hoped for. The present time was enough—the first ecstasy of the double existence when each finds a second self, who is invested with all the noble attributes that man or woman can attain. Surely it must be a noble thing to love, when loving raises our standard of good, sets up an ideal of which we would fain grow more worthy, and teaches humility by the force of contrast. Well is it for those who use that mystic season well—who by their very belief in each other's excellence help the vision to become a truth ; and, instead of gilding an idol, to find it clay at last, convert the block of marble into the glorious image hidden within ! To such the glimpse of Paradise, as seen in "love's young dream," is not a delusion, but a foretaste ; its sweetness lingers among the thorns and briars of the work-a-day world, and can even make fragrant the valley of the shadow of death.

How long it was before this lady and gentleman recollected that Miss Combermere might be waiting, we need not enquire ; Adela at last looked at her watch, and began hurriedly to pack up her drawing materials, with a vague sense of having forgotten everybody. Ernest laid his hand on the unfinished sketch. "This is my property," he said, with the air of a man in his own right.

"Will you not let me finish it another time ?" she asked.

"No : you may begin and finish as many more as you will ; but this must not be touched again. It is to my mind a memorial and a prophecy. Shadowy and undefined distance, bright and graceful foreground—such is our portion now, Adela ; and I may have been wickedly selfish, but I do not in the least repent. It will be my work, my glory, to finish the picture, and make the prospect what yours ought to be."

"You are not to work too hard," said she, glancing at the thin hands that were taking possession of her property.

"No fear of that," he replied, shaking his head, with a smile. "But—the work done to-day will make up for a great deal."

"Remember," said Adela, gently, as they moved slowly up the ascent, "that I am pledged already to a work I cannot give up. That must, for some time at least, be my first duty."

"The charge of Emily. I know it, and so far from hindering you, I hope to aid it. I, too, have a prior duty, and in that I shall look to you for help in return. Adela, you will love my mother?"

"If she will let me," was the simple answer. "I hope she will not be displeased and disappointed."

He did not admit that it could be possible; his mother's one thought was of his happiness, and this must secure hers as well as his own. Adela was only too willing to believe it, to hope whatever he said would prove true; and so they went on, castle-building, until stopped by the sight of four figures descending the hill to meet them.

In the first confusion of greetings, and explanations, and surprises, the secret of the newly betrothed remained unguessed. Soon, however, Kate detected a consciousness and abstraction in her friend's manner, that was too unusual to escape notice; the rather that Adela seemed quite unable to meet her eye; turning to Emily, or the new comers, or Dandie in preference. Ernest betrayed consciousness also, but in a different manner; and when all turned their faces homewards, three, at least, of the lookers-on had a strong conviction of the truth.

Kate, in her good-nature, talked incessantly, appearing to observe nothing. "You lost a great deal, both of you, by not climbing the hill with us," she said. "Besides seeing the town, and the hills beyond, and meeting two weary pilgrims, who had every appearance of being there by mistake, though too proud to own that they had missed their road some half-dozen times in one morning ——"

"Oh, come now!" remonstrated one dissentient voice. To which Miss Combermere paid no heed.

"Two weary pilgrims, I repeat, in a state of thirst and hunger, requiring immediate hospitality—besides meeting them, I say, we discovered a lonely hermitage looking down upon the lakelet, where bread and butter, cheese and tea, were set before the travellers, by a venerable anchorite; who utterly discomfited Lewis by saying he was the postman, and could supply us with fresh salmon on reasonable terms. Mr. Frankland has yet to learn that Grasmere is a place that delights in surprises; and that a hermit, who carries the post bag, is all of a piece with a postman who traffics in fish."

"The surprises of Grasmere go beyond the postman," said Lewis, significantly.

His gaiety of spirits had suddenly departed; the expression of his countenance was troubled. He hardly spoke to Ernest, and strode moodily along, without taking part in the conversation, or even appearing to hear it. Once or twice Kate tried to draw forth an answer,

or to win a look, but he seemed neither to hear nor to see ; and when, at last, some one announced that Sir Marcus was coming along the road to meet them, Lewis started as if roused from a dream.

"I'll go and report myself," he said ; and, bounding down the last slope, he was in a few minutes shaking hands with his old friend. When, however, the rest of the party came up, Sir Marcus was alone ; Lewis had confessed to having a headache, and had gone on to rest.

"He owned he had a bad night, and after hard work, even his tough muscles will not always carry him through," said Sir Marcus. An observation that made the Archdeacon feel rather guilty.

"I am afraid it was my fault, Combermere," he said, as they walked on together. "He is a lad who never looks tired ; and, indeed, he was in famous spirits an hour ago. I had no idea he was knocked up. Perhaps Kate knows something of the reason."

"Kate's eyes were certainly full of significance just now," conceded Sir Marcus. "What is going on ? Anything serious ?"

"I fear the two young people in front will find it so. Did you observe nothing ?"

"To tell you the truth, Archdeacon, I looked most at you. But —if your surmise prove correct, I hope it is a sign that Archdale means to take my advice, or I shall be sorry for my friend, Miss Granard. What reason have you for believing it ?"

"I never saw two people look more guilty," laughed the Archdeacon, "and you will find your daughter agrees with me. The question is whether it accounts for Frankland's headache."

"I shall soon find out ; the boy is as open as the day, and treats me as a father. Sorry though I should be to see him disappointed, it would be a satisfaction to my mind to feel sure it was nothing worse."

Mr. Burleigh looked at his friend in some surprise, but checked the question that was rising to his lips. Kate's father might have wishes with regard to her future, that he had no right to pry into. He turned the conversation to the subject on which he had spoken to Lewis, and to the most likely method of finding Mowatt. His plan was to go up to town once more, and try the chemist's shop. To this Sir Marcus observed that as he was known there, the man he sought could always avoid him if he chose.

"My belief is this, Archdeacon : that Mowatt is in league with Dangerfield, and has been trying to get an influence over Archdale, for their private ends."

"You think so ?"

"I do. I was always sorry for Mowatt : there was the making of a good surgeon in him, if only he had not been too self opinionated. And since you are willing to shake hands with him, I should be ready enough to give him a fair chance, did I see he honestly wished it. If that young fellow can bring his mind down to common-sense matters by-and-by, we will consult with him how to go to work."

Common-sense matters were certainly at a discount in Ernest Archdale's brain when he unlatched the garden gate, and nodded in return to his grandmother's greeting from the window of her pretty sitting-room. The deep poetic feeling which age had failed to eradicate from her heart, thrilled at the sight of the new brightness which shone on his wasted features. She read there, all too truly, that the deed was done—the die cast. Wisely or unwisely, she had led him to a path where there was no turning back; for joy or for misery, it must be trodden now, and followed even to the end. A prayer went up in silence for herself, for him—and for her he had chosen; that by heavenly mercy, they might never regret what she had thus helped to bring about; and so touching was the whole expression of her face and attitude when Ernest opened the door, that all idea of reticence was thrown aside. Yielding to an overpowering impulse, he came straight to her chair, and sank on his knee at her feet.

"It is as you have guessed—as I believe from my heart you wish it to be! Give me your blessing, and pray for me that I may learn to deserve it better!"

"My boy—my own darling," she murmured, as she laid her withered but delicate hand on his head, "I bless you from my soul. I pray that this may be the beginning of a life on which God's blessing will ever rest—however He may see fit to try you. Where is the sweet girl herself, that I may claim her as my own, and bless her too?"

"She is gone home with the child. She begged to be left to herself for a little while; feeling—you can imagine it—that she has no one to go to, as I have come to you. I should almost wonder at my own audacity, if it were not for the thought of the love that she will find in those who love me."

"You will write to your dear mother at once. Will you not ask her to join us here?"

"If she can—I will leave it to her. They must love each other when they are together. You believe that, do you not?"

"It would be very difficult to help loving Adela. But give them time, my dear," added the old lady, as if some doubt lay in her mind; "do not be angry if everybody is not quite so quick about it as yourself.—Come in, Bennet; I thought you would be bringing us some tea, after Mr. Ernest's long walk. We were just talking of my daughter, and wondering if we could get her down here. The change has done Mr. Ernest wonderful good already."

Mistress and maid so thoroughly understood one another, that the faithful adherent required no explanatory remarks. She curtsied to show her acquiescence and sympathy.

In the afternoon Ernest wrote his letter. It took him long to write. And it could not be sent till he had heard again from his mother, as he did not remember the Folkestone address.

The summer heat, so pleasant to bear among the hills and valleys, beneath the shade of trees, and by the side of lake or stream, was quite another matter in the streets and squares of London, where shade might be attainable at certain hours, but freshness and sweetness never. That anyone with the power of exchanging it for sea breezes could prefer to remain, would, to some of the half-stifled dwellers to whom escape was impossible, have appeared only a degree removed from lunacy. Yet such was the case with a young lady in the complete possession of as much reason as is compatible with the caprices of self-will—Miss Cecilia Wilmot.

On learning, some little time back, that Ernest Archdale would not join them at Folkestone as soon as had been expected, Miss Wilmot only expressed a little frank regret, and agreed with everybody that it was his plain duty to visit his grandmother first. The arrangements for the departure of Mrs. Bourne's party went on, as if nothing were to happen; but on the evening of the last day Cecilia announced, with apparent reluctance, her inability to travel. She had been suffering from sore-throat for several hours, hoping to shake it off before bed-time; but now she must confess she could hardly hold up her head, and had ordered her maid not to finish packing her boxes. Consternation was general, and Mrs. Bourne would have sent for advice on the spot, had not the young lady flatly refused to see anybody; all she wanted was to be left quiet. Every remedy proposed was rejected, until Mrs. Archdale made some simple suggestion, and that was acquiesced in so readily, that the case was put into her hands forthwith; and the house went to rest in discomfort.

Morning came, and Mrs. Archdale's report of the young lady with it: though there was nothing serious the matter, it would be safer to defer Cecilia's journey for a few days; but the idea of their all waiting in town, especially Miss Medlicott, who required the sea-air so much, was out of the question, and the rest must start.

"She likes my attendance," added Mrs. Archdale, "and if you will trust her to my care, I hope we shall join you in a week at furthest."

Mrs. Bourne could not help thinking it was hardly fair to leave such a charge on a guest's hands, and might have persisted in remaining to nurse Cecilia herself; but Miss Medlicott demurred to this. She had a strong dread of possible infection, and also of being prevented going to Folkestone after all, and she put so decided a pressure upon her hostess, that the kind-hearted lady was obliged to succumb. Mrs. Bourne's faculties, however, were so bewildered that her husband was fain to yield to her urgent entreaty that he would go down with them, and see them settled in their apartments; and, under these circumstances, he was really grateful for the good-humour and willingness shown by Mrs. Archdale. He promised himself that he would return in a day or two, and fetch them both; but meanwhile, his house, and

all it contained, were at the command of the two ladies he left in it ; man and horse were to do their pleasure at any hour of day or night ; and they were bound in honour each to see that the other was properly attended to, and served with the best of everything. Private discontent there might be in the servants' hall, among those left in town, at the postponement of promised holidays ; but Mr. Bourne was too thoroughly master for a whisper of murmuring to be heard ; and Miss Wilmot was rather popular than otherwise—which Miss Medlicott was not. So all was finally arranged, after an immense outlay of talking and bustle ; and Cecilia, as she heard the carriage drive at last from the door, drew a long breath, and began gradually to recover.

She would not go down stairs that day, but adopted Mrs. Bourne's dressing-room as her boudoir, and there she and Mrs. Archdale dined early, with only the young lady's personal attendant to wait upon them. All that playful coaxing and engaging sweetness could do to win a loving look or word from her companion, Cecilia tried, and not without success. Mrs. Archdale understood what it all meant, and she was more than half won before ; but her doubts with regard to her son's intentions prevented her from meeting the advances as warmly as she might have wished.

"What a nurse you are, Mrs. Archdale !" said Cecilia, as they sat together by the window, trying to think the air a little fresher than it was yesterday ; "I have only been half a day under your care and I am better already. Tell me the honest truth—is it a great disappointment to you not to be at Folkestone this minute ?"

"I have had worse disappointments in my time, my dear."

"That means a great deal. For my own part, I feel as if London had suddenly become a peaceful desert, and we were hundreds of miles away from everybody. It is such a rest ! Do you know, I can fancy nothing much pleasanter than having a house like this, entirely my own, and you with me to manage it, and to take care of my goods and of me."

Mrs. Archdale stroked the fair head that had almost nestled itself on her shoulder. It was a prospect that had its attractions : but she durst not hold out hopes that might be delusive.

"I suppose you have let Mr. Archdale know what trouble I have put upon you ?"

"I wrote this morning, my dear, to tell him where letters would find me."

"Do you think he really improves in health under Mr. Cloud ?"

"In some respects. I am not sure that the man's treatment of him is judicious, though Ernest declares he is very clever."

"Yes, so clever that Miss Medlicott went to consult him once. She came back, declaring he recommended her to take everything that was nourishing, whatever she fancied most. That is the doctor for me, Mrs. Archdale. If my throat is not well by to-morrow morning, I mean to have him here."

Mrs. Archdale only shook her head and smiled ; she supposed it was a joke ; and the evening passed agreeably.

The patient had so good a night, that in the morning she talked of taking a drive ; only, as she observed, she must hear what her doctor said first. And on Mrs. Archdale expressing surprise, Cecilia reminded her with a smile that she had given her due notice. Her maid had seen Mr. Cloud that morning, and he had promised to be with her at three o'clock.

"You need not see him, unless you like, you know, Mrs. Archdale."

Mrs. Archdale did know, perfectly, that she, herself, did mean to see and question this self-constituted authority, if he came : feeling, as she explained, responsible to Mr. Bourne.

Consequently, Mrs. Archdale took her walk in the morning, and had the vexation of hearing, on her return, that the doctor's visit had been paid in her absence. It had been owing to a misunderstanding, Cecilia observed carelessly ; her maid never did, and never could, deliver a message without making a blunder ; but the essential point was that he had given her leave to drive out, provided it was in the cool of the evening. They would have an early tea, and order the carriage at half-past seven, and come back to a cold supper. It was the only way of existing in such weather.

That the young lady had some plan in view, of which all this formed a part, Mrs. Archdale felt tolerably certain. But she chose to appear quite unconscious, and followed the lead as serenely as Cecilia could wish. It was not until they were at tea that the latter made her boldest step.

"Mrs. Archdale, I have often thought that I was a great coward, when I allowed you to go and meet Professor Dangerfield for me," she began. "I cannot imagine how I could be afraid of him : but I really was at the time."

"And very naturally, my dear. He startled and agitated you, and made you fancy him something mysterious ; when, as it is evident, he is only clever and unprincipled."

"But it is that cleverness that perplexes me. He certainly has some secret power that we do not understand ; otherwise, how can he reveal to people the strange things he does ? I have a great mind to redeem my own character for bravery, and go with you to consult him. He knows us both by sight, so he cannot pretend to treat us as strangers ; and we should at once detect any trick as to our own affairs, if he attempted such. I could put a question or two that would test his skill in earnest, and I daresay you could do the same."

"I have no doubt I could. But what would Mr. Bourne say if he heard you went there—and that I had taken you ?"

"He will hear nothing of the kind. It is I who mean to take you, and bear you harmless for humouring my whim. Come, dear

Mrs. Archdale, you cannot refuse me ! The idea of an exciting novelty is doing me nearly as much good as your nursing. We will counter-order the carriage, and go for a walk instead, taking Jessy with us ; and she will get us a cab, and hold her tongue afterwards. It must be so."

All remonstrance would probably have been of so little avail, that Mrs. Archdale refrained from offering any, and this rather moved her young friend to compunction.

"I promise to be very quiet, prudent, and well-behaved," she said, caressingly ; "no blame shall fall upon you on my account. Something tells me that we may hear good news ; but if it prove to be only nonsense, we shall have the satisfaction of telling the world how cleverly we found out the imposture."

The fact of their being personally known to the philosopher certainly took a great deal from the interest of the experiment ; but if he could succeed, despite that, in impressing them, his triumph would be the greater. Cecilia seemed to vacillate between the hope of being astonished, and the desire of a victory over the man who had frightened her ; Mrs. Archdale had some curiosity, a little fear, and a keen recollection of his having claimed her friendship—whatever he might mean by the word. He had shown her that he possessed means of penetrating into the affairs of his neighbours, and her own in particular ; and it was just within the verge of possibility that he might stand the test she could apply. If he did, and if he could help her in her need, there would be no scruples on her side against accepting his services. But the chance of this was so small, that she could not divest herself of the sensation that she was a puppet in the young lady's hands, and she resolved to watch her carefully, lest something might be hidden under her seeming playfulness which Ernest would never forgive.

No drawing back now. The plan was carried out to the letter : and at eight o'clock precisely, Mrs. Archdale and Cecilia Wilmot presented themselves at the door of the house where Professor Dangerfield held his séances.

(To be continued.)



OUR MISSION HOMES IN PARIS.

BY ANNE BEALE.

IN the month of June, 1874, the writer of this paper met Miss Leigh, for the first time, at a breakfast given in Aldersgate Street by Mr. T. B. Smithies to the missionaries to foreigners connected with the London City Mission.

As Miss Leigh was understood to have come from Paris on some sort of foreign mission, she was allowed, when the pleasant meal was over, the same privilege as the other missionaries: namely, ten minutes to give an account of her work. The task was evidently new to her, but she said, with much simplicity, that she had come to England to ask for ten thousand pounds to purchase a house in the Avenue Wagram, Paris, as a home for unprotected English girls in that city. It is not surprising that this announcement was received with an incredulous smile by all present, and that the speaker was looked upon as an enthusiast. But as missionaries must be also enthusiasts, they wished her God-speed, while believing her mission visionary.

They were obliged to leave at a given hour; but some eight or ten ladies who were of the party remained behind. These gathered round Miss Leigh, who, flushed and excited, distributed amongst them some leaflets, on which was printed an account of the misery and degradation to which unbefriended English girls were subjected in Paris. The feminine instinct was moved, and sympathy at once excited, and from that hour to this the writer has followed the work with intense and ever-increasing interest.

Its rapid and marked success has astonished the world, and not even the most carping of critics can deny that marvellous results have followed a small beginning. In less than a year from the time of this "Missionary Breakfast," the needed sum was collected and the "Home" purchased. Scarcely four years have elapsed since that event, and it has already become the centre of multiplied operations. A second month passed in their midst is the plea for again offering a detailed account of them to all who are interested in the well-being and doing of their fellow-countrypeople in foreign parts.

77, Avenue Wagram is a large, cheerful, handsome mansion, with the customary French jealousies and numerous étages. It has housed some fifteen hundred English girls since it was first opened, and it would be impossible to estimate what that means in a great city. It implies, at least, many rescued from temptation, some from starvation, a few, may be, from self-destruction; for it must never be forgotten that this "Home" is preventive and not reformatory.

Here English or American girls may find, for the small payment of from eight to ten shillings a week, shelter while seeking situations, or temporary rest and refreshment while passing from one country to another. Unfortunately—or fortunately, as may be—the idea of keeping girls in their native land is now exploded. While forty or fifty foreign governesses already sit down to dinner every day at their club and home in Bayswater, the English replace them abroad. One language no longer suffices us. To be acquainted with a foreign tongue or so is not now a distinction. The English language spreads far and wide.

From this “Home” alone it pierces to every quarter of the globe. English girls, whether governesses, ladies’-maids, or nurses, seem prepared to start at a moment’s notice when they have found the situation that suits them. During the last few weeks only, one has departed for Poland, another for Russia, a third for America, a fourth for China. On the other hand, one arrives in the middle of the night from the far north, another from the south, on their way for a holiday, at home, in England. Sometimes, alas! one, friendless and alone in the world, comes to die. And let us be thankful that there is a sanitarium and certificated nurse on the topmost étage, where the sick are tenderly cared for; and that Christian ladies are at hand to soothe the suffering, or strengthen the departing soul. Many thankfully declare that they owe the dawn of gospel light in their hearts to a sick-bed on that sixième étage. One who has just left for a situation, believes that she owes her life to the prayers offered up for her, night and morning, by the assembled household.

This “Upper Storey” was an over-crowded orphanage, until M. Galignani generously presented his beautiful hospital at Neuilly to Miss Leigh as a children’s “English Home” for ever. And thither twenty-seven happy little ones trooped on the 27th of November, 1876: and there, surrounded by gardens, and nourished by pure air and loving treatment, nearly forty now expand and flourish like the flowers.

Of those whom we saw, three years ago, in this, the first orphanage, some are gone forth into the world to earn their bread, others are monitresses or servants in their new abode, and a few have been either adopted or claimed by friends. All *were* destitute and are now respectable. “Rescued!” we may say, in most instances.

But we must confine ourselves, at present, to the “Home.”

Descending from the sanitarium, flat after flat of this large house is variously appropriated. One for servants, another for governesses, a third for daily governesses, or such English girls as find their occupation in Paris, but do not actually reside where they work, and so on. A lady helper takes charge of each étage, who gives her willing service voluntarily, and defrays her own expenses.

One or more of these ladies may be seen daily in a room on the entresol, the door of which is always open. Theirs is, truly, a

labour of love; for they attend to the registry for governesses and servants. This, like their services, is free, and is open all day long. French and English frequent it equally, and between thirty and forty situations are procured every month. The value of this branch of the work is incalculable, since references must be given to ensure the respectability both of employer and employed. Places are sought and found, either personally or by letter, and hundreds of French ladies bear testimony to the excellence of this institution, and to the worth of the English girls they have received from it.

Engagements made in England through agencies often prove terrible failures, and harrowing facts of girls decoyed from thence are still frequently made known. Indeed it would be impossible to print stories that are constantly occurring, and are brought before the head of this house. Suffice it here to say, that every case, however melancholy, whether of sin, sickness, destitution, or sorrow, that comes to her knowledge is investigated, and, when possible, relieved.

There are English girls in every hospital. We have seen them in those of Beaujon, the Hôtel Dieu, the Maternité, and the Maison des Diaconesses; and all thanks are due to the French who have sheltered and tended them, "strangers," and "sick" as they were. Large hospitals, full of patients in all stages of suffering, are sad sights; but there is something peculiarly affecting in the condition of the foreigner alone and dying, perhaps, in the midst of other sufferers whose language she may not understand. To such the visits of the ladies from the "Home" are of inestimable benefit; and the aid given in sending many such back to friends in England comes like manna in the wilderness of an arid, misused life. Now Sir Richard Wallace's magnificent English hospital at Neuilly will receive our countrypeople, and this kind of isolation will be unnecessary. This is situated near the orphanage and Christ Church, and helps, with them, to form a sort of nucleus for the English who live in that pretty, healthful suburb. No one who has visited this triad of good works—seen the sick and dying in the grand, airy hospital; the destitute children in the bright orphanage, and the worshippers in the new church, could fail to offer prayers and alms for the maintenance of institutions raised for the salvation of soul and body.

This chaste and beautiful church was opened for public worship on the 22nd of June, 1878, being another branch of that small seedling produced at the "Missionary Breakfast" afore-mentioned. That the Prince and Princess of Wales laid therein a memorial-stone must add to its interest in the minds of the English. But what, before all, demands our sympathy and gratitude is that it is filled with worshippers every Sunday, and that down the nave and in the choir sit the blue-mantled children of the orphanage hard by.

Sir Richard Wallace has nobly endowed his splendid hospital; but

its neighbours and coadjutors, the church and orphanage, still crave similar endowment.

So, indeed, does the "Home for English Girls," situated about a mile from them, with other branches of this rapidly-growing plant, which has already thrown off, besides the church and orphanage, a Young Woman's Christian Association—really its first offshoot—a crèche, mission hall, soup kitchen, classes for men, women, and children, a mothers' meeting, and a governesses' institute.

Tea has become an institution as precursor of evangelical work. We were invited to partake of it on various occasions. Some thirty or forty mothers, with their babies, appeared to enjoy it just as much in France as in England, and seemed to join all the more vigorously in the hymns that succeeded it for its refreshing inspiration. So did their husbands who frequented the Sunday Bible-class in the mission hall. Many have returned thanks for the good derived from the study of the Scriptures on these quiet Sabbath evenings.

The promise of *tea* again allured us to the Faubourg St. Honoré, where, overlooking the Palace of the Elysée, are the modest rooms of the Young Women's Christian Association. The prospect of a pleasant soirée attracted hither at least a couple of score of English women from various shops and situations. The ladies had made the rooms as bright and cheerful as possible, and lights, flowers, and music enlivened the scene. Friend greeted friend, and conversation flowed. Yet even here English reserve penetrated, and one solitary girl remarked that it was easier to make acquaintance with a foreigner than a compatriot. One of the first inmates of the "Home" was present, and it was delightful to witness the warm greeting between her and her whilom benefactress. She was in an excellent situation at a distance, and they had not met since that early acquaintance. Gratitude has not fled from this our globe, as some people say. The excited "Will she come? How I long to see her!" of this gathering contradicted the assertion, while the glowing faces and the rapturous welcome when the "happy she" did arrive, bespoke not only gratitude but love.

The hospitality of these rooms is not reserved for the fortnightly soirée. They are always open, and, on Sunday, free meals are given to all who come, books provided, and a Bible-class held. The rest and peace attainable here are thankfully accepted by many, whose only alternative would be a lonely garret or the temptations of the Boulevards. We had the happiness of sharing a six-o'clock dinner with twenty or thirty, and the opportunity of judging how well the boon was appreciated.

Encore un thé, and we have done with eating and drinking. We partook of this at the Governesses' Institute in the Rue de Morny. Here, also, is a fortnightly réunion, whither ladies engaged in tuition or studying language or art, may come. Again all was as bright as the kindly ladies who presided could make it. But many a young heart

was anxious or sad, nevertheless, and most of the guests could tell tales of hardship or suffering. One informed us that she had obtained a situation in Paris by means of an agent in London, and that it had been a terrible experience. Her employer was a woman of violent temper, and had nearly strangled her. She escaped for her life into the streets. She knew no one, and was unacquainted with Paris. Happily she fell into good hands; but terror and the injuries she had received threw her into a fever, and she could give no account of herself. They told her afterwards she should have applied to the English embassy, but she knew of no embassy. She had come to Paris to teach a little boy English, and, if possible, to acquire French herself, which she scarcely understood. And this is a sample of the young governesses suddenly whirled, so to say, into the vortex of Parisian life. She had secured another situation, and was struggling on.

We have a sadder story yet to tell in connection with this soirée. One quiet, pale girl who was present, and who was a member of the institute, was dead the following Monday. She was living in a family every member of which treated her with affection. But she was taken suddenly ill, and the doctor who was summoned ordered her to a hospital for an operation. She died from the effects of it, there—alone! A sister, also a governess in Paris, was summoned in time to see her alive; the ladies of the institute too late. They and the good father of her pupils followed her to her grave in a distant cemetery, while all at the “Home” mourned for her. The lady with whom she lived mourned also, and said they knew not she was ill, adding: “She suffered silently, though she wept much when we were alone together; and my children, who loved her, asked why she was always triste.”

It is to help such sorrowing and lonely girls that the institute is formed. On the payment of a small sum for membership it will be open to the governess, and she will be able to procure refreshment under certain regulations. On Sunday there are free meals and a Bible-class, as in the Faubourg St. Honoré. A library of good and useful books is much needed here: and pure, healthy literature, heavy or light, religious or secular, foreign or English, would be welcomed as the *bonne bouche* of the aforesaid meals. But it must be prepaid before it reaches the mouths of the hungry expectants at 33, Rue de Morny, and anyone will be considered a benefactor, who will afford this *free bonne bouche*.

For, let no one suppose that either this, or any other branch of these manifold good works, can be self-supporting. The philanthropic scheme is too extensive, the machinery too varied and intricate. The islanders on the other side of the Channel can scarcely estimate this; but the Parisians fully appreciate it, and render occasional aid to what they consider a great and necessary work. We heard many express admiration; none disapproval. One

well-known foreign lady of distinction emptied her purse on Miss Leigh's desk, without "counting the cost"—and all—Romanists, Jews, Protestants—can sympathise where creed is no barrier to admission.

Yet difference of creed is a terrible barrier to the respectability of many young Englishwomen in Paris. A marriage contracted in England between a Frenchman and an English girl is not legal in France unless ratified according to French law. She does not know this, and accompanies her husband and children to France without suspicion of evil. Several instances have occurred of men deserting their wives and children under these circumstances, and leaving them friendless in a strange land. There is no appeal, for unless the marriage has been duly posted up in the quartier where the man's family dwells, and has received the consent of his parents, the poor girl married in England is no wife in France, and her children are illegitimate. Several such broken-hearted and deserted women have found a refuge for their children at the orphanage, and temporary aid for themselves, while either vainly imploring the pity of their husband's friends, or seeking employment. Lawgivers in both countries should see to this.

To such as these and numberless others, the crèche has been of untold benefit. It is strange to watch a score or so of English infants disporting in this foreign home, and to see the interest that the French concierge and his wife take in them. Still more strange to listen to the strong foreign accent of the English children.

It is not the fault of Miss Leigh, or her helpers, if all these good works do not result in miracles of salvation. But they are human and sometimes despond, when they receive, as the fruit of their labours, ingratitude or misconception.

There is in the "Home" a Belgian cook, whose cuisine and philosophy are never at fault. Hearing one of the ladies bemoaning one day, she said, "Eh bien ! mademoiselle ! The good God never yet succeeded in pleasing everybody, and how can you hope to do it ?"

This common-sense remark is worth a whole volume of sentimentality.

Not that there is much time here for sentimentality. "Work ! work ! work !" is the order of the day, from 6 a.m., when the concierge arouses the household by six heavy strokes on the most resonant of gongs ; to 9 p.m., when the house echoes to nine similar metallic blows, summoning its inmates to prayers. Let anyone desirous of regularity and punctuality keep a French concierge and a Belgian cook. Nine times a day, to the given minute, does the gong sound for meals and services—and fifteen times per diem does the lift creak as it bears as many meals from the kitchen underground to the various refectories above.

And these chefs never seem to need change of air or scene. They were in their proper places when the "Home" was first opened—they

are there still. "Mid all the changing scenes" of the life around them, and all the exciting restlessness of the age, they are always at their posts. A good lesson for us all, if we would but learn it.

The lesson, however, that this sketch would inculcate is, that Paris swarms with English. While numbers are there for mere pastime, others are struggling, starving, dying in garrets, or even on the streets. It is the same here as at home. Men out of work or idle from drink—women and children suffering. Young girls, hoping against hope, while studying to be artists, teachers, or modistes; and learning to be communistic with the communists, and to *forget* "Their Creator in the days of their youth."

These are startling *facts*: let us lay them to heart. Let such parents as can, keep their daughters at home; and let girls themselves pause before they rush into temptations of which they know nothing. But, while things are as they are, let us all lend a helping hand to these noble institutions in a foreign country, which seem to stand, as it were, on an isthmus, between the Gulf of Perdition on one side, and the Harbour of Safety on the other.



GOD'S TEMPLE.

SILENTLY as a vision of the night

It rose in beauty; not a sound was there

Of workman's axe or hammer, to affright

The sabbath stillness of the summer air;

But stone by stone, each ready hewn, was brought,

Fitted as by the Angel's measuring rod

To fill its destined place. Thus fairly wrought,

Rose the old Temple to the living God.

A greater one we build; and day by day

Sorrows and trials shape the chosen stones;

Patience, that waits, and hopes, that fade away,

And faith, that trusts, and love's persuasive tones—

Each silently perform their work for years.

No sound is heard, and yet prepared they stand

By the long training of their prayers and tears,

As ready for the mighty Master's hand.

So shall we never dare to craven shun

Trials most sore and long, if such there be

Needed to make us perfect every one;

Since temples of the Holy Ghost are we.

M. I. PLARR.

MISS JOHNSON.

I.

"FOND as I am of Wilfred, I must say that he puts me out of all patience when he writes such nonsense as this!" remarked Lady Eustace, with the air of a superior person provoked by a petted child.

Her ladyship looked very little more than a child herself, with her big brown eyes and her soft curly hair on a white forehead, her slender little figure, and her dainty Titania-like air. The Wilfred of her blame was a brother, six feet high, and formerly a captain in a Lancer regiment.

Sir Charles Eustace, a ruddy young baronet, seated opposite his wife at the breakfast-table, had unfolded the *Times*, and was already deep in the news from the East. He contented himself by responding by a receptive "Humph!" to the lady's observation, but remained otherwise absorbed in Herzegovina.

"Just at this moment, when I had built all my hopes on Edith Courtenay's visit to us," continued Lady Eustace, with a somewhat petulant glance in the direction of her spouse.

"Won't Carruthers come?" asked Sir Charles, assuming a faint air of interest.

"Oh, yes! he will come. But with his ridiculous ideas he will spoil everything."

"Dear me! I hope not," said Sir Charles, who had an absent-minded idea that he ought to say something.

"How provoking you are, Charles! You know you are not listening to a word I say," exclaimed Lady Eustace, now fairly cross. "I never understand why men pretend to be interested in politics, when they have every other kind of mental effort in detestation. I am sure I think the views of Russia and the backslidings of the Turks just as puzzling as algebra or Greek roots, or any other of the things you never *would* learn at school."

"Of course you do," responded Sir Charles, perfectly unmoved.

"Won't you have another cup of tea?" asked his wife, with a sudden return to amiability.

"If you please." The tea was poured out and passed over. Seizing the diversion thus effected, Lady Eustace said sweetly: "I should like to read you Wilfred's letter. Perhaps you may be able to infuse a little common-sense into his fantastic theories."

"Fire away!" was the Baronet's answer. And, thus encouraged, her ladyship began:

"DEAREST GEORGIE,—You are very anxious that I should spend July at Thornleigh with you, because, you say, at this season London

is growing dusty and dull, and because Miss Courtenay will be with you. Miss Courtenay has just lost her cousin, Miss Griswold, you tell me, with whom she lived. The funeral is to take place, and the will is to be read, to-morrow; and you know, 'on the best authority,' that Miss Griswold has left Miss Courtenay all her property. Finally, because the old lady's estate adjoins mine, you desire me to espouse the heiress.

"London is dusty and dull I admit; and being, furthermore, desirous of making a study of oaks for a background, I am willing to run down to Thornleigh, and shall appear there a very few hours after this letter. But dismiss from your mind that I shall, under any circumstances, be induced to marry Miss Courtenay. She may be all you say: lovely, clever, amiable, delightful: but she is not the bride of my dreams.

"You are wont to describe my theories in regard to marriage as 'trash.' Trash or not, however, there they are, and I intend to act up to them. The conventionalities of courtship are odious to me. To meet a young lady at a picnic or a ball; to become engaged to her a month or so later; to be congratulated by all her friends and mine; to have to dine every day with her family, and be ostentatiously left in quiet corners with her by her sisters—all these things fill my soul with horror. I should like to discover a wife as I stumble upon a rare bit of china in a bric-a-brac shop—in some odd corner of the world. If it were possible, I would charm an old portrait into life as Pygmalion did his statue. Failing the new Galatea, I will marry a woman who shall charm me suddenly like some new effect of light. You will say this is nonsense, and that I talk about an ideal wife because I do not want a real one. What will you say, then, when I assure you that I not only believe in my fairy bride, but have *seen* her—aye, and know her most unromantic maiden name?"

"Read my story.

"Two years ago you may remember that I spent the whole of a delicious spring in Florence. One evening I went to pay a visit to a charming old Italian lady and her somewhat elderly daughter, who lived in a tumble-down ancient villa not far from the gates of the town. When I arrived it was already darkling; the fireflies were all about, and presently the moon rose. We sat on a terrace overlooking the town, which gleamed silvery in the intense white radiance, and against its background of purple hills. Magic lay on every dome and pinnacle, and seemed to whisper from every rustling leaf. The garden, set with statues and planted with ilex and cedar, had not one modern touch about it. The scene and the hour were Romance's own, and the last touch of exquisiteness was given when some of the party—for the neighbours had dropped in in the sociable Italian fashion—began to play the guitar and sing 'stornelli' in their musical Tuscan tongue.

"You know how I have always maintained that music, to be per-

fect, should be born of the moment. Imagine, then, my pleasure, when there fell upon my ear the strains of a simple and pathetic melody, sung by the richest and sweetest contralto I had ever heard. I wished that the singer might never end, and when she did so, I looked eagerly for a glimpse of her. She emerged from the circle of people into the moonlight, and stood there for a moment holding the guitar while she answered a question addressed to her. Then she fell back again into the shadow, and all that I had learnt of her in that brief moment was that she was lovely, and that they called her 'Bianca.' She only sang once, and left with some others. In a little confused talking which ensued while she was saying "good-night," I gathered, greatly to my surprise, that she was English, and was leaving for England on the morrow. A fresh shock awaited me in the additional discovery which I presently made of her father—a gruff old fellow who spoke half a dozen words of broken Italian, and addressed his daughter in not the purest English.

"As soon as my fair Bianca was gone, I began to wish her back again. I was quite glad when, half an hour later, in the road, along which I was returning alone, I saw and picked up a bracelet which I knew to be hers, for on the plain gold band was her name, 'Bianca,' in pearls. Besides, I had noticed it on her wrist as she stood in front of me holding the guitar. I retraced my steps, and reached the great door of the villa as the old servant was bolting and barring it for the night. He looked rather surprised at my reappearance and said the ladies had gone up to their rooms. I begged they might not be disturbed, showed the bracelet, explained my errand, and requested that the servant would find out for me the name and address of the young lady called 'Bianca,' who was leaving for England the next day. He went, and presently returned with a card. It was the signora Inglese's name, he said, which he could not pronounce, and I should find the young lady and her father at the Hotel de l' Europe. I read the name by the light of the moon, and will not pretend to say that I was delighted to find it——'Johnson!' I went the next day early to the hotel, with every expectation of finding the persons I sought for, for I had distinctly understood them to say that they were leaving in the evening. But a waiter informed me that Mr. Johnson had found a telegram awaiting him on his return to the hotel the night before, and had left with his daughter by the early train. They had gone to Paris, and ordered all letters to be forwarded to the Louvre.

"I was going to Paris myself the next day, and my fancy was caught at the idea of the chase. But I was again doomed to disappointment, for, on reaching Paris, and enquiring at the Louvre, I found that the object of my pursuit had once more distanced me by twenty-four hours; this time without leaving any address. At the hotel, however, I came across Wetherall—you remember Wetherall, my old college chum?—I happened to mention the Johnsons to

him. He said he had sat next to them at dinner, but had not found them particularly interesting (Wetherall's idea of female beauty is of the bouncing order, so I did not contradict him), adding that the 'old boy,' who, he thought, was a retired 'tallow-chandler,' rather bullied his daughter. 'The poor girl's eyes were always swollen with crying.' Had I known where to seek my persecuted one, I should have followed on her traces immediately; but how find one Johnson more than another in London?

"Independently of any other feeling, however, the most elementary honesty bade me make some further effort to find the owner of the bracelet, and so I prosaically advertised in the *Times*. But I received no answer, and the gold band has remained all this time at the bottom of my dressing-case. It has been with me in my recent wanderings in Germany and Belgium, and I have never looked at it without its bringing back to me the poetry, the fragrance, and the melody of that soft Italian night. I forget the 'tallow-chandler,' and think only of Bianca, with her statuesque profile, and her enchanting voice. Never having had for me any very definite personality, I must confess that, with the lapse of time, she has come to have less; and each time my memory recurs to her, it is to weave a more and more fantastic and ethereal image. But the possibility of her actual existence in your very neighbourhood has struck me forcibly once or twice of late; ever since you told me, in fact, in one of your letters, that Lord Seatown's place had passed into the possession of a Mr. Johnson. For I remember Wetherall said that he thought Bianca's father must be a fellow-landsman of ours, as he had spoken of the county with affection, declaring that he intended to end his days there if he could find an estate to his liking. Now, here, my dear Georgie, is an opportunity for the exercise of your talents as a matchmaker. You wish me to take to wife an heiress, and, possibly, the only one of the race I could ever marry lives within six miles of your gates. Mind, I pledge myself to nothing. All I say is, that it is just within the range of likelihood that Miss Johnson's songs might reconcile me to her guineas. At any rate, I have now given you a chance: You have a week in which to work, and must begin, of course, by making the Johnsons' acquaintance, if you do not already know them. I fancy you do not, for you have prejudices in favour of blood, and I should say old Johnson's was none of the bluest. But should his daughter turn out to be my Bianca, that will only make her the more fascinating to me; for her soul, and not her ancestors, must then be responsible for her lovely face.

"You have my ultimatum. I shall be at Thornleigh by the 5.30 train, on the day you receive this.

"Your affectionate brother,

"WILFRED CARRUTHERS."

"Did you ever hear such nonsense?" exclaimed Lady Eustace, as

she laid down the letter, and looked plaintively across the paraphernalia of the breakfast-table at her husband.

"Humph!" again remarked Sir Charles, but this time reflectively. He had reasons of his own for not replying precipitately. "Carruthers was always eccentric. Prides himself, I fancy, on being different from other people."

"But so far he has never *done* anything very odd," moaned the eccentric one's sister. "Suppose he insists now upon marrying this dreadful girl?"

"How do you know she is dreadful?" enquired Sir Charles, deliberately buttering a slice of toast.

"A tallow-chandler's daughter!" Proofs that Miss Johnson had committed all the crimes in the Decalogue could hardly have been advanced by Lady Eustace in a tone of more absolute horror.

"Mr. Johnson isn't a tallow-chandler. He is in the corn trade."

"Well! I don't see much difference."

"There you are wrong. Corn merchants are most respectable men. Many of them send their sons to college. The never-stagnant stream of middle-class industry is our Pactolus," said Sir Charles, who wished to get into Parliament, and spent a good deal of time in rehearsing speeches in his head.

"I don't know what 'our Pactolus' means," said Lady Eustace; "but whatever it is, I am quite sure that it can't be any advantage for a country, if it entails a general mixture of ranks. I am sorry to see you becoming so radical, Charles."

"My dear child, there are certain concessions which everyone must make to the spirit of the age. To be honest, I have long wished that you would call on the Johnsons."

The die was cast, and the intrepid baronet breathed more freely. Lady Eustace sat transfixed. Fastidious to a fault, the little lady had always practised, as well as preached, the most refined social exclusiveness.

Suddenly, however, Sir Charles had developed the ambition to enter Parliament; and began anxiously to look forward to the hour when the death of an old and infirm county member would enable him to present himself to his constituents. He had already commenced a preliminary campaign, and seized every opportunity of expressing in public his views and his policy. These were of a strongly Liberal cast, and as there had been a partial Conservative reaction in the county, the future contest promised to be an exciting one. Sir Charles felt the necessity of cultivating popularity. It had been conveyed to him that Mr. Johnson was considerably aggrieved at having been held at arm's-length by one or two of the county magnates, and the baronet had begun to turn over in his mind how he could bring his wife to visit the retired dealer in corn. Consequently it is hardly to be wondered at if his brother-in-law's letter appeared to him almost like an interposition of destiny.

Lady Eustace, as has been said, sat transfixed for a moment. "Well, Charles!" was all she could, at last, exclaim. But volumes would have failed to say more.

"I cannot think how you can wish me to call on them," she continued, after a pause. "You see even Wilfred found the old man vulgar."

"But he found the daughter charming. And really, Georgie, it is necessary for Carruthers to marry well. With his place so heavily mortgaged that he cannot afford to live in it, and the immense mass of his father's debts which he has undertaken to pay, he will be all his life pinched in pocket, unless, as you very sensibly wish him to do, he marry a woman with money."

"Of course!" said Lady Eustace. "But why should he not marry Edith Courtenay?"

"But if he won't? It would surely be better for him to marry Miss Johnson than to lead a semi-Bohemian existence to the end of his days. Mr. Johnson is enormously rich."

Lady Eustace slightly shrugged her shoulders and knitted her dark eyebrows.

"Reflect a little on the matter," the Baronet continued, rising, and gathering his newspapers and his letters together. "Carruthers is so odd. If you don't manage him in his own way, you will not be able to manage him at all."

Lady Eustace did reflect on the matter, and the result of her reflections was that she ordered her pony-carriage, and went to call on the Vicar's daughter. She recollected that when Mr. Johnson came into the neighbourhood for the first time the previous winter, he had roused the enthusiasm of Mr. Barstow, the vicar, by certain munificent acts of benevolence; and it struck her that from Rose Barstow she might acquire some useful information in regard to the obnoxious plutocrat.

It so happened that Mr. Johnson's estate being in another parish, Lady Eustace had not seen either him or his daughter at church; and the brief glimpses she had had of them in the streets of the county town had not made her familiar with their faces. What she much desired to know was if Miss Johnson were really beautiful, and for this piece of information she addressed herself to Miss Rose Barstow. Whatever it was she heard, it appeared to be of a satisfactory nature, for she drove home with a satisfied and even a radiant air.

II.

MEANWHILE Wilfred Carruthers sped down by the afternoon train from Charing Cross, and he, too, smiled occasionally to himself as he thought of the letter he had written to his sister, and of the effect it must have had on her.

Partly it had been dictated by a love of teasing, partly by the

hope that, in diverting her mind from Miss Courtenay, it would cause him to be left in peace, at any rate as far as regarded that young lady. But all bantering as his letter had been, beneath its fanciful romance had run just a tiny vein of seriousness. Fastidious as his sister, although in another way; poetical and artistic in his tastes, sensitive and honourable to a fault, Wilfred Carruthers, by a certain originality of thought and feeling, justified his sober-minded brother-in-law's accusation of eccentricity. The world had been in many ways a disappointment to him, and had he been naturally less genial, he might have become soured. His career as a soldier, the one that would best have suited his chivalrous temperament, had been abruptly cut short by his father's death. This event, in leaving him half ruined and burdened with debts that he was resolved to pay, had obliged him to sell out of the army and enter upon a course of severe retrenchment. He had sought an occupation in Art, and had spent several years on the Continent, leading an existence curiously compounded of Bohemianism and exclusiveness, repulsing nobody and yet becoming intimate with none. No man ever seemed so little above his society, whatever it might be, and yet no one was ever more absolutely reserved. The strain of half sad, half tender humour in his nature reconciled him even to the ugly, the sordid, and the grotesque side of things. And yet sights and sounds of beauty had for him a fascination enduring and profound. Consequently, while wilfully exaggerating in his letter the impression left on him by the beautiful songstress, the idea that his sister's new neighbour might be identical with the girl whose voice had so enchanted him was not devoid of a certain subtle charm.

Lady Eustace flew down the broad flight of steps in front of the manor, when the carriage that had been sent to meet the traveller reached the end of the avenue, and greeted her beloved brother with the utmost warmth. Sir Charles followed with a "So glad to see you, Carruthers," which, if less effusive, was not less sincere; and the heir of Thornleigh, a fair, curly-headed urchin of four, immediately introduced himself and his new drum to his uncle's friendly notice.

After dinner, at dessert, when the servants had gone, Carruthers said, laughingly: "Well, Georgie! you got my letter, of course. What news have you for me of Miss Johnson?"

"You will see her very soon. Rose Barstow is going to manage the introduction," said her ladyship, demurely.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Carruthers, too much surprised to do anything else than take refuge in an Englishman's pet adjuration. Sir Charles also looked up astonished. He, also, had not expected his wilful little wife to haul down her colours so soon.

"That seems an unusual way of doing the thing, Georgie," he remarked. "Don't you think it would be better to leave cards?"

"But if we have only a week before us, as Wilfred wrote, the less

time we lose in preliminaries the better," answered Georgie. "Besides, it appears that Mr. Johnson is gone to London for a few days, and his daughter is alone. Rose, who became rather friendly with her when staying in her neighbourhood last month, is going to invite her over for twenty-four hours, and will bring her to see me."

Carruthers sat silent, pulling his long moustache with rather a comical air of discomfiture. His sister observed him from under her dark lashes, and was satisfied. She had had a fortunate inspiration that morning when she resolved to weary him of his fancies by letting them have free play. If Miss Johnson failed to charm him, there was all the more chance of success for the beautiful Miss Courtenay.

"I suppose you will go with Charles to Miss Griswold's funeral to-morrow, Wilfred? It would only be a proper mark of respect to an old neighbour of ours, and one that you have known since you were a child," said the wily little lady, later in the same evening, when she found herself alone with her brother.

"I hate funerals, Georgie. The conventional trappings of woe are odious to me," replied Carruthers. "But as I did know Miss Griswold all my life, and as you wish it, I will follow the poor old lady to her last home. I daresay I shall be as sorry as anyone else present."

"She was not very amiable," remarked Georgie. "Edith had a great deal to put up with. But all that is over now, and she is mistress of five thousand a year."

"It is something that she should have earned it," said Wilfred, drily.

Georgie looked at him uneasily. She felt that her observation had jarred on him, without exactly knowing why. "Edith is really charming," she said with earnestness, as though replying to an unspoken attack.

"So are all your heiresses. But how is it that I have never seen this particular paragon?"

"You have been here so little of late, and Edith has always been away at the time of your visits. Besides, it is not quite two years since she first came to live with Miss Griswold. All her youth was spent abroad, I believe; and she only came to her cousin when the death of her father, who was a half-pay officer, left her an orphan."

"And Miss Griswold took her from charity?"

"Oh no! Edith would not have consented to that, I am sure, for she is almost as ridiculous as you are, Wilfred, and that is saying a great deal," replied Georgie. "Miss Griswold was ill, and wanted a companion."

"And in that dependent position, and in so short a space of time, your friend distanced all competitors in the old lady's favour!" exclaimed Wilfred. "I congratulate her on her tact."

"There were no competitors—except, of course, the grand-nephew," said Georgie.

"The grand-nephew?"

"Don't you remember," said Lady Eustace, in explanation, "that Miss Griswold had a sister who ran away with a French music-master?"

"Oh yes! It was the great social event of one winter in our childhood. But, surely, the sister died without children?"

"No, she left a daughter, only the Griswolds were so reserved about it that nothing definite was known for a long time. But one dreary afternoon last November the sister's daughter, a poor, broken-hearted-looking woman, with a pretty, pale-faced little boy, came down here, and introduced herself to her cousin."

"And with what result?" asked Carruthers.

"With the result of alienating herself hopelessly from her aunt at the end of a week. She was turned away by the tyrannical old woman after quite a violent and painful scene."

"And the pretty, pale-faced little boy, of course, went with her?"

"Of course. She was a tactless, foolish kind of person, I believe, and seemed to have inherited the Griswold temper. And now, poor thing, she is trying to educate her child and support her sick husband by teaching in some little town in France."

"And these are the people—a sick man, a broken-hearted woman, and an ailing child—that Miss Courtenay defrauds of their inheritance!" exclaimed Wilfred, with such sudden energy that his sister dropped her work into her lap, and looked up at him quite startled.

"Defrauds! Dear Wilfred, what a strong word! Poor Edith could not help her aunt's prejudices, or the other person's temper," expostulated poor Georgie, plaintively.

"She could help taking the money," replied Carruthers, curtly.

"I dare say she will do something for those people. Perhaps educate the boy," suggested Lady Eustace with soothing intention.

"I dare say. A sop to Cerberus, intended to stop the mouths of a few inconveniently honest-minded people," retorted her brother.

Lady Eustace began to feel very much aggrieved. "You are so strange, Wilfred!" she said, poutingly. "So different from other people! I don't see why you should spoil my pleasure in your visit here by being cross with me because I cannot rise to your heroics."

"Nay, Georgie, I do not mean to be cross," answered Carruthers. "Only I am disappointed that you should be so blind to—to certain things. But I am wrong to blame you for it; it is the way of your world."

"I don't suppose my world is any worse than yours—all made up of artists and people," answered Lady Eustace, still considerably ruffled. "I did so hope you would like Edith," she went on.

"Dear Georgie," interrupted Carruthers, with a quiet gravity that silenced even her, "dismiss from your mind now and for ever that I would consent to repair my broken fortunes with such an inheritance

as Miss Courtenay's. I do not despise money, for I know its value and I feel its want ; but my life, if not very productive so far, is at least not dishonourable, for I have tried to better it by no unworthy means. On the other hand, I am not morbidly scrupulous, and if I loved a rich woman, her wealth would not prevent my marrying her—under certain conditions. But at no time, under no circumstances, could I share in a prosperity that had been purchased by a flagrant act of hardness, if not of absolute injustice."

"Oh ! why did I tell him about that little boy ?" was Georgie's last regretful thought as she closed her eyes that night.

III.

MISS GRISWOLD'S funeral was over, and the few mourners had assembled in the library of the Grange (her house) to hear the will read. Sir Charles Eustace, his brother-in-law, the Vicar, Mr. Barstow, and the servants, with the lawyer, composed the party. Apparently Miss Griswold had had no relatives beyond the disinherited niece and her cousin, Miss Courtenay, who had not as yet appeared. Mr. Aitken, the lawyer, sat with the will spread out before him, waiting for her to come. Prejudice, like any other strong feeling, is stimulating to curiosity, and Carruthers, preoccupied with all he had heard, looked up expectantly when the door opened to admit the heiress. She walked in slowly. A tall, graceful girl, with trailing, sable robes ; cheeks pure and pale, but not with the pallor of ill-health ; a broad brow, crowned with wavy masses of bright, chestnut hair ; grave, grey eyes, that looked forth, fearless as Pallas Athene's, from under the shadow of black lashes : such was the picture presented to Carruthers' startled gaze. He had been prepared for beauty, but not for this rarest, nameless charm.

With a slight, gracious bow to the vicar and Sir Charles, she sat down, and the reading of the will began.

The old lawyer's dry, monotonous tones awoke Carruthers from his enchantment. He remembered that the girl whose loveliness so absorbed him was the mercenary heiress he had resolved to detest. But the few minutes which had elapsed since his eyes first fell on her had so far modified his dislike that with it there mingled now a sharp feeling of regret. He found himself listening almost eagerly to the statement of the will in the hopes that the "pretty, pale-faced little boy" might be mentioned in it. But Miss Griswold had apparently died unforgiving, for, with the exception of a few bequests to the servants, one to the lawyer, and another to Mr. Barstow, Edith Courtenay was declared sole residuary legatee of her cousin's "real estate and personal property."

A pause followed on the lawyer's last words. The eyes of the hearers travelled to Miss Courtenay and there fixed themselves. The expression on most of the faces was curiosity mixed with reverence.

The reverence was for her newly-acquired wealth, the curiosity was to see how she took it.

She took it very quietly, as Carruthers noted with illogical disgust. Considering that she had probably been already acquainted with her cousin's intentions, she could hardly be expected to protest against them in the moment of their being made public.

Sir Charles was the first to break silence. He rose, and crossing over to where the heiress sat, congratulated her in a few kind and appropriate words. Then he introduced his brother-in-law, who bowed rather stiffly, and finally he claimed Edith's promise to return home with him. "Lady Eustace was anxiously expecting her, and would take no denial."

Edith acquiesced with the graceful calm that seemed habitual to her. Carruthers was constrained to admit that, if she showed little feeling, she had some good taste; for she left the gentlemen to eat their luncheon by themselves, and betrayed by no word or act the smallest desire to assert her new position as mistress of the Grange. To the lawyer she said, at the moment of parting, "You have had no news, Mr. Aitken?"

"None as yet. But there has hardly been time. We only wrote little more than a week ago, four days before your poor cousin's death; and the first report, as you know, was unsatisfactory."

"I should like the uncertainty to cease as soon as possible," said Edith.

Mr. Aitken bowed. "You may depend upon me not to lose a moment in communicating with you," he replied.

By the mistress of Thornleigh Manor, needless to say, Edith was received with open arms; but she was fain to confess, before three days were over, that she made small progress towards the goal of her desire. As far as she could see, and with every wish to see the best, there was between her brother and her guest an invincible coldness worse than any dislike.

And yet, in so judging, Georgie lacked true insight; for, whatever Miss Courtenay's secret feelings might be, Carruthers was conscious in himself of a certain struggle which nothing would have induced him to betray. He was alternately attracted and repelled by Edith in a manner that puzzled himself. Just as he had made up his mind that his admiration was for her beauty alone, since morally she was entirely conventional, some observation in her low, rich voice, some brief radiance of feeling in her pure and perfect face, would surprise him with the suggestion that possibly he misunderstood her after all.

But such moments were rare and fleeting, for she observed towards him an attitude of reserve as marked as courtesy would allow, and for which a little incident that happened a day or two after her arrival appeared to be principally responsible.

Georgie and her friend were seated, one warm morning, on the

terrace overlooking the Italian garden and the broad sweep of undulating sward, planted with noble oaks and "immemorial elms," that, stretching away to the silver line of the river, was broken a moment there, and again rose beyond.

"You had never seen Wilfred before, I think?" asked that arch schemer, her ladyship, in a careless tone, while her serious attention seemed to be entirely absorbed in the shading of a cyclamen in crewels.

"Never."

"Don't you think him handsome?"

"Very handsome."

"He has the face of our ancestor who sailed with Drake, and who, in his portrait, looks as noble as Bayard, and as brave," said Georgie, with unusual poetry. "And he himself is like an old Crusader in his exaggerated chivalry. Poor Wilfred!"

Edith looked round, apparently interested. "Tell me about him," she said.

Lady Eustace, nothing loth, in words which affection made eloquent, told how her brother had resolved to pay his father debts; how gallantly he had faced his changed fortunes; how simply and nobly he had lived. She described his passion for art, his rare delight in beauty, his sensitive honour, his proud reserve. As she spoke she grew more and more animated, and a flush of responsive enthusiasm rose to the cheek of her listener. "He always says that he will make money by his pictures when he shall have worked enough; but I know he has a secret shrinking from barter, though he would not own it, for he thinks the feeling a weakness. Meanwhile the dear old place will probably never again be his home," concluded Georgie, with tears in her brown eyes; "for he will be an old man before it is redeemed, and perhaps he may never even have children to whom to leave it."

"Why not?" asked Edith.

Lady Eustace felt that a critical moment had arrived. She was a little agitated as she answered: "You see he could hardly afford to marry a penniless girl, even living as he does. To be reinstated in his old position he must marry a woman with money; and unfortunately his fastidious notions stand in the way of that. He would have to fall in love with an heiress, in spite of himself." ("If *that* does not make you resolve to marry him, I don't know what will!" was Georgie's mental commentary on her own words.)

Edith sat perfectly silent. Was she touched or displeased? Georgie could not decide, and began to be rather alarmed at her own daring. She felt relieved when Wilfred himself appeared at the open window, and with a gay "By your leave!" stepped upon the terrace, and presented Edith with a tall white lily. She thanked him smiling; but Lady Eustace exclaimed, "You might have found something better in the hothouse, Wilfred."

"True," said her brother; "but I wished to make a sketch of Miss Courtenay with a lily in her hand, if Miss Courtenay will be so gracious as to allow it."

"Certainly," said Edith: and while Carruthers looked gratified, Lady Eustace positively coloured with delight. Here was an opportunity indeed! She fluttered away, and left the artist and his model to themselves. But although Edith sat beautifully, and Carruthers made a very conscientious design, they did not find a great deal to say to one another, or make much progress towards a more intimate acquaintance. Only as Wilfred ended his sketch and looked up to thank his sitter, he was startled to find her lovely, serious eyes fixed upon him with a glance of peculiar contemplation. She lowered them instantly on detection, and, so far as so calm a person could, she even looked a little embarrassed.

"You must do me the honour of looking at the sketch," he said, holding it out for her inspection; "though it maligns you, of course."

"You are bound to say so," replied Edith. "And you will answer me in the same words, if I say that I find it idealized."

"That is just the ground for my own dissatisfaction with it," he returned. "Only idealized is not so much the word as enfeebled. You look a little too much like a mediæval saint, or some affected modern improvement on the same—such as the blessed Damozel."

"But that I ought to regard as a compliment," said Edith.

"I think not," answered Wilfred reflectively. "It is true I had a vague, mystical idea in my mind when I gave you the lily to hold; but I had not drawn many strokes before I found out my mistake."

His secret thought was that her beauty, though a little queenly and cold, had flashes of something very human. He wished she would raise her eyes to his again, and let him see what was really the spirit—whether of pride, or tenderness, or passion—that dwelt in their depths. But she kept them fixed on the sketch, and yet, it seemed to him, not in contemplation of that. Presently she gave it back to him, without a word; whereas most women would have sought to continue a conversation on that most fascinating and fruitful of all themes—themselves.

Carruthers felt a little disappointed and, truth to tell, a little sorry. Was she offended that he would not admit the likeness between herself and a mediæval saint?

"I am afraid you are hardly satisfied with my attempt," he said. "But you should make allowances, reflecting how unattainable is perfection—even to imitate."

Edith laughed—the softest, sweetest, most silvery of undertoned laughs. It took him by surprise, for she was generally rather grave, and in this unmistakable ring of amusement there was quite a revelation.

"And you should make allowances, knowing how difficult it is to discuss oneself."

"That is a difficulty foreign to most people," answered Wilfred.

"You think so?" said Edith. "Yet *you* never speak of yourself."

No observation could have been made more simply or naturally: and yet its immediate effect was to freeze them both. *His* first movement, indeed, had been to draw a little closer to her; but he stopped, for he saw that she shrank from him—though almost imperceptibly.

"I suppose I can go now?" she asked, and this time looked full at him, but it was with a glance of perfect indifference.

"By all means—if you wish it," answered Carruthers, and drew aside to let her pass.

She gathered up her work and left him quietly, without haste as without delay. But she was not quite so pale as usual; and he looked almost annoyed. And yet, if questioned, he could hardly have said why. The little scene, such as it was, had a hidden significance that irritated while it escaped him. Miss Courtenay's looks or tones could have had no particular interest for him, since he could not be called in love with her, and passing flirtations had at no time any attractions for him. But the vividly disagreeable part of his impressions was the consciousness that the heiress had intended to repel him. He could only suppose that she was afraid of his seeking her fortune, and his blood fired at the thought. He studiously avoided her from that moment, but by not so much as a passing glance did she betray the smallest perception of his behaviour. Her superb indifference would have piqued a vainer man than Carruthers into pursuit; but his pride was absolutely sincere. The only effect produced on him by Edith's conduct was—in so far as it confirmed his suspicions of its cause—to deepen his original prejudice against her.

As may well be supposed, this state of things reduced poor Georgie to the verge of despair. She had counted on Edith's beauty to overcome Carruthers' fastidious scruples; and if this potent spell failed, what should succeed? In her distress, Georgie's thoughts actually at times turned with an oscillating movement caused of mingled attraction and repulsion towards Miss Johnson!

IV.

"PRAY, Georgie, when am I to see Miss Johnson?" asked Carruthers one morning at breakfast of his sister. "You promised me I should make her acquaintance immediately. Yet here have I been five days, and that intangible young lady is as intangible as ever."

"You will see her this evening after dinner," said Georgie. "She has had a swollen face—possibly induced by her love of singing to the moon," maliciously continued her ladyship, "which obliged her to put off her visit for a few days. But before going to bed to-night you will know the colour of her eyes."

"Is Mr. Carruthers very much interested in the colour of Miss Johnson's eyes?" enquired Edith.

"Profoundly so," replied Carruthers gravely. "And in everything connected with Miss Johnson. Do you happen to know her?"

"Yes. Very well. We lived in the same neighbourhood one whole year in Italy. It was by my recommendation, in fact, that Mr. Johnson bought Lord Seatown's place. I knew he wanted to live in this county—though I don't think his daughter did," added Edith, smiling.

"Poor girl! Her father persecutes her, I believe?" asked Wilfred, with reviving interest in the distressed damsel of his dreams.

"Not exactly. Only he objected to Bianca——"

"Bianca! there, Georgie!" interpolated Wilfred triumphantly. "I beg your pardon, Miss Courtenay. Pray go on."

"Her name, of course, is Blanche. She always insisted upon being called Bianca, because of her love for all things Italian," explained Edith.

"Did her love extend to all men Italian?" enquired Georgie, wickedly.

"Only to one, in particular. Her father made her very unhappy, for a time, by not allowing her to marry a count whose blood was as blue as his purse was ill-furnished."

"There, Wilfred!" mimicked Georgie. But her brother ignored the exclamation.

"Is not Miss Johnson a most charming person?" he asked with great seriousness.

"I think she is very good," replied Edith, after some hesitation.

"And tall, and very beautiful, and with an exquisite voice?" persisted Carruthers.

"Oh! don't tell him—please!" cried Georgie, clasping her hands. "He saw her once in the moonbeams. He has the most exalted notions of her. Pray leave them undisturbed."

"They would not be disturbed by a contrary judgment to my own," said Wilfred. "Ladies don't understand one another's beauty."

"You mean to insinuate that we are jealous?" cried Georgie.

"I mean to insinuate nothing. I state a fact."

"Then I shall not proceed to illustrate it by telling you what I think of Miss Johnson," said Edith.

That afternoon, Mr. Aitken, the lawyer, arrived with an important air, and was closeted for a long time in the library with Miss Courtenay. Carruthers, chased from that retreat by the invasion, felt put out, and said rather biting things regarding heiresses to poor Georgie. His bitter feelings were not improved when, on coming down to dinner, he found himself alone in the drawing-room with Edith, and had leisure to observe how gloriously handsome she looked. Her cheeks had a delicate flush, and her eyes shone like

stars. "The poetry of investments has fired her soul!" thought Wilfred, hugely disgusted. But he was destined to a great surprise. On the Baronet and his wife entering the room, which they did almost simultaneously, Georgie's first remark had reference to Edith's occupation that afternoon.

"I am afraid your new cares weary you, dear," she said tenderly. "You look quite overwrought."

"I feel a little excited," returned Edith, rather tremulously; "but my new cares have been of short duration, and now they are over."

"But they will begin again," said Georgie. "When one is mistress of the Grange——"

Edith interrupted her.

"I am no longer mistress of the Grange, if, indeed, I was ever to be called such. That property, I am glad to say, has passed into the possession of its rightful owner."

"I—I don't understand," stammered Georgie.

Carruthers' heart had given a great throb of exultation that considerably surprised himself.

"It is a long story," said Edith, "and one which I have been anxious to tell you for days; for, indeed, I have felt—though I knew that it was an injustice towards you to do so—as if I were here under false pretences. It is true that my poor cousin left me all her money by will, and that was a resolution which she arrived at immediately after the unfortunate scene with her niece last year, with which you are acquainted. But in the enjoyment of a fortune obtained at the expense of what I felt to be a great injustice I never could have been happy, and consequently I, and Mr. Aitken, and Mr. Barstow with me, exerted what influence we had with my cousin to induce her to alter her will. But she was for a long time inflexible. She was, as you know, a person of the strongest prejudices. She chose to imagine that all her niece had told her about herself, her sick husband, her ailing child, and general circumstances, was just one tissue of falsehood; and the idea that any of her wealth should be extorted from her by what she described as 'impudent fictions,' simply drove her wild. But towards the last she began to yield; and although nothing would induce her to admit that she had been in the wrong, she confessed that, if she were quite sure the boy would turn out well, she should be glad to think that he might one day own the land.

"Mr. Aitken wrote immediately to France to have enquiries made. I am sure that my cousin had a secret hope of their turning out favourably; for, with the delicate generosity which she had in some things, she sold out railway shares to the amount of £10,000, and reinvested them immediately in my name, thus providing against any fear of future poverty for me. It was the presentiment of her fast-approaching end that made her do this, I think, for she wished to elude the necessity of re-making her will. It was a kind of salve to

her pride, I fancy, that her kinsfolk should receive from me what they chose to consider, and what was, indeed, their right. There was delay in getting the answer from France, for the poor people we were in search of had changed their place of abode, and had left no address. Meanwhile, my cousin sank rapidly and died, as you are aware, rather suddenly at the last. She had a morbid dislike to having her affairs or intentions discussed after her death, and made me promise to keep all the enquiries secret until I knew that the result was satisfactory. What she shrank from most, I imagine, was the idea of any disgraceful facts coming out in regard to her relatives. She had so long hugged the conviction of their unworthiness that she could not divest her mind of it all at once; only, in her altered state of feeling, what had been a kind of malignant pleasure to her, came to be, at the last, a fear. But I am glad to say that the report I received from Mr. Aitken was everything that could be wished. The little boy, with his father and mother, will be here in a few days, and as soon as the necessary formalities have been gone through, the transfer of the property will be effected. It only remains now for me to disclaim any right to be considered mistress of the Grange."

Edith stopped. She had spoken quite simply, and had got through the difficult task of recounting her own generosity without showing, by a single look or phrase, the sense that she was doing anything extraordinary. But it is probable that she was a little surprised by the silence that followed her words. The truth was, that of her three listeners, Carruthers alone could quite rise to her level. And he was silent for another reason—or rather, for a host of other reasons. Sir Charles, not knowing exactly what to say, expected his wife to speak first, and poor Georgie was simply stunned. At last, Sir Charles spoke, and in his straightforward, well-bred manner, found exactly the right words.

"I cannot pretend to congratulate you, my dear Miss Courtenay," he said cordially, "since everything you have told us is only a fresh proof of how nobly you would have spent the wealth had you considered it really yours. And I will not compliment you, for that would be superfluous. All I can say is, I should be glad if the interests of justice were always confided to such hands."

Sir Charles (always with an eye to his future constituents) felt very well satisfied with himself as he finished his little speech; and, indeed, I think he had reason—don't you, reader?

"Dear Edith, I must kiss you!" said Georgie. And under that favourite feminine act of expansiveness her little ladyship hid a world of disappointment.

At this juncture the butler announced dinner.

It was rather a silent meal, for Edith was a little too excited to talk much, and Georgie's mortification was so great that she was on the very brink of tears. What increased her irritation was, that she noticed how Carruthers—while he talked politics rather absently to

his brother-in-law—continually watched Edith. "One could think she had done it on purpose to vex me!" was the thought that rankled in Lady Eustace's breast, as she reflected how positively inevitable it was that now, when the "heiress" was an heiress no longer, Carruthers would lay his heart at her feet.

She carried Edith off to the drawing-room as quickly as she could after dinner, and when she had her there, hardly knew how to be civil to her. She was thankful when the gentlemen came to relieve her from the necessity of talking; and regretted it the next moment, for Carruthers took his seat by Edith's side. Altogether, she was in a most uncomfortable state of mind, and hailed, with a joy that she had never expected to experience on such an occasion, the moment when her drawing-room door was thrown open by the servant, announcing "Miss Johnson and Miss Barstow."

"I hope we are not late," said the Vicar's bonny little daughter. "Allow me, Lady Eustace, to introduce my friend, Miss Johnson."

"Delighted!" murmured Georgie. "My husband—Miss Johnson. Mr. Carruthers, my brother."

Tall? Shade of Anak! Miss Johnson was undoubtedly *that*. A young giantess, in fact, with red hair, a fresh, honest, ugly face, and the most perfect self-possession. She grasped her hostess's hand with a fervour that sent all Georgie's diamond rings into her delicate fingers, and made her wince with pain. She acknowledged the gentlemen's bows with an air of gratified condescension, and, on catching sight of Edith, strode across the room and enfolded her in a herculean embrace. The effect produced by her appearance was remarkable for its unanimity—being principally astonishment. In Georgie's case the feeling rose to consternation, of which her face was a picture. Even Sir Charles's decorous countenance wore a look of amaze; while as for Carruthers, after the first gasp of surprise, he subsided into an arm-chair, and, from that secure resting-place, surveyed the lady thus introduced into his sister's drawing-room much as he might, under similar circumstances, have contemplated a young giraffe.

Miss Johnson, to do her justice, was quite at her ease. Five minutes after her entry she was established on the divan next to Georgie; and while sipping a cup of Orange Pekoe, expatiated on herself, her views, her doings, and her papa, with an ingenuous egotism and an entrancing vulgarity.

"Now really, Lady Eustace," she said, "you cannot think how glad I am to find myself here. And pa is delighted too. Of course I wrote and told him the instant Rose gave me your invitation. And he will have been beside himself for pleasure: that I know."

"I am enchanted, I am sure," said Georgie. "If I had ever thought——"

"Of course," interrupted Miss Johnson, warmly; "I always said to pa, 'Lady Eustace can't be calling on the whole neighbourhood.

But if ever I meet her, you just trust me to make friends with her.' And now it's done, you see!"

And in an access of cordiality the young lady extended an ample paw.

"Indeed I have every reason to be grateful to Miss Barstow for her introduction," said Georgie, hastily employing her still-aching little hand in seizing her guest's cup.

"No more tea, thank you," said Miss Johnson, who, as Georgie moved away from her, transferred her attentions to Edith, remarking facetiously: "So I hear we have become companions in misfortune." Seeing Edith look rather mystified, she added in explanation: "Both heiresses, you know. And riches are a snare to the feet of the unwary, so of course we ought to be condoled with. Would not your father say, so, Rose?"

Edith, in a few words, explained how she was about to transfer the property to her cousins, out of regard to the last spoken wish of Miss Griswold.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the corn-merchant's daughter. "But you might have kept it if you had liked, mightn't you? Probably the poor old lady was wandering a little at the last."

"I don't think she was," said Edith, amused.

"Well! it's noble—isn't it?" said Miss Johnson, admiringly; "but somehow it seems a pity, too."

The remark was addressed to the company in general, and though nobody answered it, it is probable that it expressed the sentiments of the majority. Not at all chilled by the silence, Miss Johnson resumed: "You are not a bit like other people. I always said so. You remind me of the heroine of a novel."

"You were always of a romantic imagination, Bianca," said Edith, playfully. "In our old Italian days, I remember, you endowed with the qualities of a Joan of Arc every peasant-girl who spun by the roadside; and every Gigi or Cecco who sang to a guitar was in your eyes a Rizzio."

"Dear Italy!" sighed Miss Johnson, sentimentally.

"By-the-bye, Wilfred, you have never given Miss Johnson her bracelet," said Georgie, with a wan little smile—the very ghost of her vanished merriment.

"A bracelet of mine!"

"Yours," answered Carruthers, "as I have every reason to believe. I picked it up outside the garden of the Villa Guidotti two years ago, and it has your name on it." At the same time he drew it from his pocket. It was to be an evening of surprises, for ———

"Ah! that is mine!" exclaimed Edith Courtenay, in joyful amazement, and stretched out both her hands.

"Yours!" Carruthers looked at her with a sudden thrill of intense emotion. As for Georgie, she nearly groaned aloud.

"Mine indeed," said Edith, smiling at his hesitation, of which she did not understand the cause. "My second name is Blanche also, and that bracelet was given me in Italy, where they called *me* also Bianca."

"We were always called the two Biancas," observed Miss Johnson, complacently.

"Then were *you* at the Villa Guidotti that night?" inquired Carruthers, with an earnestness which seemed so disproportionate to the occasion that Edith looked at him in wonder.

"The night I lost my bracelet? Of course I was. And I remember now hearing that somebody had found it and enquired for its owner; and poor Madame Guidotti was in despair at the mistake which had caused her to give you the wrong address. She sent her son to look for you, but you had flown."

"Well, now you have found the right owner, don't you think you had better return her property, Wilfred?" asked Georgie pettishly, provoked with her brother, who stood looking at the bracelet in a dreamy way.

"True!" he said, and crossed the room to the sofa where Edith sat. "Let me put it on you." The touch of tender familiarity in his tone—that subtle inflection which is more eloquent to a woman's ears than words—brought the colour to her cheek. Except for that sign of emotion she sat like some fair statue. While he clasped the golden circlet round her wrist her arm was resting on the back of the sofa. With a muttered excuse about the fastening of the bracelet, he bent his head as if to look closer, and, swiftly, before she could guess his intention, his lips, for one brief instant, touched her hand. When he looked up the statue had come to life, at last, and in the beautiful eyes, that he had sometimes thought too cold, he read all that he had ever hoped to see there of proud but entire surrender, and of passionate though purest love.

"Look at the moon! It is like a copper shield," said the Vicar's daughter graphically, pointing through the open window towards the hill behind which the ruddy disc had just risen.

"Oh! let us go into the Park!" suggested Miss Johnson, ever romantic.

This idea was backed with much enthusiasm by Carruthers. The baronet and Rose Barstow preferred a battle at chess—a game at which they were both capital players, and were in the habit of inflicting on one another the most terrific defeats.

"Then you come with me!" said the irrepressible Miss Johnson to Georgie, and seized her victim by the arm. Lady Eustace, who was by no means accustomed to do anybody's will but her own, would probably have resisted, under ordinary circumstances, and come off victorious into the bargain. But the spectacle of Carruthers and Edith already on the terrace so galvanized her powers of revolt that she was led forth by the gigantic heiress as meekly as a lamb to

the slaughter. If her intention, however, was to keep her eyes on the lovers, she counted without her host—or rather, without her brother.

“Let us go to see the swans asleep on the lake,” was his perfidious suggestion.

“Delightful!” exclaimed Miss Johnson, which was exactly what he expected her to say. And he knew that the way to the lake was by devious paths where he would have no difficulty in dodging his sister.

It consequently happened that in a very short space of time he was alone with Edith in a moonlit path, where their footsteps startled the deer asleep in the shadow of the beeches. And Carruthers told Edith how “on such a night” two years before, in Italy, he had seen her for the first time. In words simpler than his sister’s, but which found none the less an echo in the heart of the girl beside him, he recounted how he had struggled with poverty and battled with despair. “You are still too rich for me, my darling,” he said; “but that thought will only make me work the harder. As a ruined gentleman, I have worked for my own sake, to save myself from a death in life. As your husband, I feel that it will be easy for me to become an artist. Do you think me worth saving from poverty and from oblivion?”

He had taken her two hands in his, and held them tightly pressed to his breast. The soft light fell upon her lovely upturned face, on which he looked with a tender, half-doubting, half-confident, questioning smile. She made no answer, and gently drew away her hands. Then, just as a pained look of dawning disappointment clouded his brow, she drew his head down and pressed her sweet lips to his.

And poor Georgie? Well, she is reconciled to the *fait accompli* now, especially as her brother is rapidly growing famous. And, what is more, she has become bitten with her husband’s political mania, and learnt the value of popularity. Strangest thing of all, she has even come to tolerate and, in a certain way, to like Miss Johnson; and, with a satisfaction hardly inferior to that of the young lady herself, has arranged a marriage between the colossal *roturière* and a very small, extremely-ruined nobleman—of pronounced Liberal views.



RACHEL.

AT the door of the little French theatre where, in the year 1835, St. Auliar taught his pupils, might have been seen standing beneath a smoky lamp a thin, dark, poverty-stricken little girl. Her hair hung down her shoulders in two braids; she was dressed in a short calico frock, with a red ground and white spots; her boots, of coarse black leather laced in front, were scrupulously polished. Simple and grave beyond her years, her childlike face bore an impress of modesty, and even dignity. Such was the future great actress soon after the arrival of her family in France.

Rachel was born of Jewish parents, in Switzerland, but the exact place of her birth cannot be discovered. She led a wandering life from the first, and after a long and wearisome pilgrimage, in which her mother's struggles to conquer adverse fortune were indefatigable, the family settled in Lyons, where they opened a small second-hand clothes shop. Here, whilst Sarah, the eldest child, went about singing from one café to another, her younger sister, Rachel, collected the pence, sometimes trundelling between them on a barrow a third child, to relieve their mother for a short time of the care of the baby.

Towards the year 1830 the Felix family came to Paris to try their fortunes, like so many others before them. Rachel's father was born at Metz. At first he had intended to become a Rabbi, but afterwards changed his mind and assumed the avocation of a travelling pedler. He seems to have been a regular Shylock in respect to money, and always to have been ready to sacrifice justice and reason to the love of gain. His temper was subject to fits of violent anger, but he generally kept it under, and, methodical to a fault, his conduct was for the most part governed by good sense. This he showed in never joining with her mother and the rest of the family in praising and extolling his daughter's talents; and his judicious advice was of great use to Rachel in helping onward her success.

An amusing scene is told of a disagreement which occurred between Rachel's master and her father when she was learning a new part. M. Samson advises his pupil to speak the word "Toujours" with head erect and a firm and resolute tone. The father interposes and says, "No: you must say the word mildly; with great feeling." The master, annoyed, "It must be said authoritatively." The father, getting obstinate, "It must be spoken pathetically." M. Samson, "I am her teacher and must not be interfered with." M. Felix, quite furious, "I am her father and must be obeyed."

This scene took place before Rachel was of age, and when she was getting over 90,000 francs for one year. Indeed, one of the most striking facts in the career of this celebrated actress is the rapidity

of her rise from obscurity to fame. When once her name had begun to be spoken of, her reputation was made. This was doubtless owing in some measure to the praises heaped upon her by the most eminent French critics.

Her first appearance at the Théâtre Français in the part of Camille, on the 12th of June, 1838, was a negative success. True, all Paris was out of town, and the weather extremely hot; the boxes consequently were empty, and the pit and galleries filled with Jews who had come to do honour to their countrywoman. Only three months after this, when Jules Janin, the celebrated critic in the *Débats*, returned with the rest of the world to Paris, and witnessed one of Rachel's performances, how suddenly is the picture changed! Fortune turned her wheel, and the obscure Jewess all at once became famous.

From this time all the trials and sufferings of Rachel's early youth are left behind, and her future life was a constantly increasing series of triumphs, without any severe heart-aches in the private circle. In Paris all the great people, from the King downwards, did her homage. Madame Récamier, who retained in her declining years the charms which had rendered her once so potent, still drew around her a circle of the most eminent personages of the day. Into this refined company Rachel was admitted, and her modest demeanour and perfect tact, for which we are told she was always remarkable, never allowed her to prove herself unworthy of the honour.

At this time she was only 18 years of age, and her health, never very strong, seemed to give way altogether; she was threatened with a complaint of the lungs, and subject to frequent fits of illness. The time when she was not allowed to perform, she wisely employed in making up for the deficiencies of early education. She studied grammar, and soon learned to write correctly. This girl, whose childhood had been spent in haunts of poverty, easily acquired the manners of a gentlewoman. Her taste was cultivated by the study of the classics, and her company was sought after by the most eminent statesmen and the most talented politicians.

Yet the character of this celebrated actress was anything but amiable. She had very little sentiment, and was by nature cold and without softness. It has been said of her that she had no real feeling, and that her acting was the result of quick perception and earnest study. The characters in which she most excelled were not those requiring great pathos, but rather the utterance of violent passions. On one occasion, when she was acting the part of Marie Stuart, she quite startled the audience by the fury of her invective against Elizabeth. She could depict the angry queen paying back the insults of her tormentor, but she could not understand the touching words of the imprisoned sovereign when the canopy, the emblem of royalty, is torn from her chair—"Place the crucifix here, and let us kneel."

When away from the stage her character was full of faults. In society her manners were refined and elegant, but she had no idea of making any sacrifice to the dignity of art. She would crush anyone who seemed likely to stand in her way, or attract the notice of the public. She would not allow any actor or actress of any excellence to appear at the same time with herself; and she used to come on and off the stage with so little regard to what the other performers were doing and saying that she often destroyed all effect, and confused the action of the play.

We cannot follow Rachel through her many professional tours in different parts of the world. She acted the same plays, and appeared in the same characters, and received the same applause, almost everywhere. The love of moving about, and the passion for gold, led her constantly from Paris to the provinces, from France to Russia, Italy, England, and, finally, to the United States. When in England, she was treated with the same favour as in Paris, and was invited to the parties of the leaders of the world of fashion. It is rather surprising to find that, on these occasions, her father and sister always accompanied her, and the daughter's attractions must have certainly been very considerable to render the presence of a Jewish pedler acceptable to the society of the English aristocracy. The Queen condescended to notice her, and she was invited to Windsor, and presented to her Majesty by the Duchess of Kent. The royal gift, we are told, on this occasion consisted of a bracelet, engraved with the inscription—Victoria to Mademoiselle Rachel.

Many anecdotes are related of Rachel's love of money. At one time she used to tell her admirers that she was making a collection of emeralds, who, taking the hint, hastened to present their offering to the tragic muse; another time it was rubies, and finally sapphires. When her ingenuity or the generosity of her victims was exhausted, a jeweller was sent for, to whom the collection was sold, and the money more profitably invested, though in a less brilliant shape. The story of the guitar is so amusing, and, at the same time, authentic, that we must try and find space for it.

The celebrated artiste had noticed at the house of a friend a guitar of the most respectable antiquity. Rachel asked the owner if she would mind giving it to her; and the request being complied with, the instrument was sent off to Rachel's lodgings. A few days after, the guitar appeared enveloped in a beautiful silk net, suspended on the gilded wall of her elegant boudoir. "What in the world have you there?" observed a visitor one morning. "That," said Rachel, "is the humble guitar with which, when I was a child, I earned scanty pittance as a poor little street singer." The gentleman was charmed, and insisted on becoming the happy possessor of this priceless treasure. After a little difficulty, he gained the coveted relic for the trifling sum of 50,000 francs. But unfortunately, the former owner of the guitar, calling on the Count, recognised the instrument as an

old friend, and cruelly told him the circumstances which led her to part with it. On Rachel afterwards being informed of the dénouement of her little speculation, she calmly and smilingly observed, "Poor —— ! How furious he was."

But we must hasten on with our sketch.

After travelling about for some years, and acting her chief characters in different parts of the world, she always returned to take her place at the Théâtre Français, where, if she was not always welcomed so warmly as she could have wished, still she generally succeeded after a short time in regaining the favour of the Parisians. It was her love of taking these theatrical trips which made her unpopular, next to her extortion. Until lately the custom of paying enormous salaries to favourite artists, and the system of starring—the invention entirely of the English and Americans—were unknown. It is almost needless to say how much mischief has been done to the cause of art by this bad habit of attracting the attention of the public to one person, at the expense of all the other performers, who are sacrificed to the interests of one lucky individual. Rachel was a distinguished offender in this line.

It was at a grand religious festival, given by the Jews in America, that she caught the cold which caused her death. She had always been delicate in her chest, and on several occasions had been compelled to retire to the South of France or Switzerland to recruit her strength. This American venture, urged on by the rapacity of her brother Raphael, was, as might have been expected, a great mistake. Though it paid financially, the receipts did not nearly equal those realised by Jenny Lind under the skilful management of Barnum. American ears could not appreciate the stately roll of her French Alexandrines; and American taste, used to the seductive scenes of the romantic drama, found only an intolerable monotony in the endless speeches of Corneille and Racine.

The countenance of the tragedienne herself was sad and cloudy as she embarked, on the 4th of August, 1855, on board the *Pacific*, to leave the shores of Europe. She may, perhaps, have been reflecting on the cheerful prediction of M. Dumas, that should Rachel succumb to the climate or fatigue, like Sontag, her brother Raphael would make the best of the misfortune by having her embalmed, and exhibiting the body of Rachel to the Americans, since he could not exhibit her alive.

The narrative of this voyage records few incidents of any interest, consisting, for the most part, of the names of the characters in which she appeared, the engagements obliged to be broken by ill-health, interspersed by miserable quarrels amongst the family themselves, and the other actors making up the company, till at last, broken in spirit and already stricken by the hand of death, the ill-fated actress returned once more home, but only to die.

The events of the two remaining years of her life may be briefly told.

After returning to France, where she spent the spring, she was ordered by her physician to pass the winter in Egypt. All chance of recovery, however, was now gone, though Rachel herself still hoped to live. She returned again to Paris, but not to her own hotel, which she had ordered, while at Cairo, to be sold, with all the presents from her numerous admirers with which it was adorned. Her last removal was to Cannet, a little village near Cannes, where a friend had placed his villa at her disposal. Before leaving Paris, on her way to the railway station, she ordered the carriage to stop before the Théâtre Français, where so many of her triumphs had been gained. There, lost in thought, she contemplated the doors which she had entered poor and unknown, to leave rich and celebrated; and now, after possessing all the world's prizes, her cup of life was nearly empty, and her last hopes almost fled.

The mild and balmy air of the neighbourhood of Cannes, where reigns a perpetual spring, and where, even in winter, the sky is ever clear, seemed to revive, for a time, the spark of life. Sometimes, when free from pain, she was calm and cheerful, and on one of these occasions was carried down into the garden to see the peasants, who had assembled there, dance, for her amusement, one of their Provençal dances called *Farandoles*. But the calm was only for a moment, and she had to be borne back, fainting, into the house.

Her death was quite calm and tranquil, though her desire to live was intense, and the nearer the approach of death, the more despairingly she clung to the life now fast fleeting away. She was buried in the cemetery at Père la Chaise, followed to her last resting-place by all that was most distinguished in the literary world of Paris. But the demon of discord, which had so often marred some of the brightest moments of Rachel's life, followed her still to the last, and an angry letter written by her father to M. Samson, her old master, forbade him to speak her funeral oration, and prevented his appearing at the final scene.

In bidding farewell to this celebrated actress, it is with a feeling of pity rather than of pleasure that we view her career. As a great dramatic artiste Rachel will always be remembered. In comedy she never succeeded, her manner, voice, and style quite unsuited her for such parts. In reading the memoirs of her life we only on one occasion meet with an act of spontaneous generosity beyond the circle of her own family, while traces of meanness, envy, and avarice are found in every page. In her love of gold, as we have seen, she was quite insatiable, and whilst proud of her birth as a Jewess, she united with some of the genius many of the vices of that "peculiar people."

E. B.

LADY BEAUMONT'S PROTÉGÉE.

I.

" I AM so very happy ; so very thankful."

The house was a small one, in a shabby London street. In an upper room, engrossed in earnest conversation, were two ladies. One lay sick upon a poor bed of that mean apartment, dull and dingy despite some attempts to brighten it in the shape of flowers and tasteful arrangement: the other was only a visitor there, as might be read in the evidence of wealth and luxury in her dress. Her carriage, with its fine horses and servants, waited her pleasure without. She, Lady Beaumont, looked younger than her years, and the perfection of health was shown in her clear complexion and robust, stately frame. Mrs. Lonsdale, on the contrary, bore upon her countenance traces of premature age, as well as of physical suffering. Yet it was the poor woman, dying in poverty, privation, and pain, who gave utterance to the grateful exclamation of joy.

" I am so very happy ; so very thankful."

Lady Beaumont and Mrs. Lonsdale had been friends in their youth ; but the varying fortunes of life had separated them far, and they had not met for years until this day. Mrs. Lonsdale, under the constraining influence of a great and all-absorbing care, had sent for Lady Beaumont. This anxiety was for the fate of her only child, a girl thirteen years of age. In leaving this beloved child without a protector lay her sole reluctance to quit a world which had never used her too tenderly, and no longer held any charms for the poor widow. Lady Beaumont had come in answer to her summons, and had relieved her of this pressing trouble by an assurance that she would take the girl into her own care. After the first brief outburst of gladness upon the generous promise, there was silence for a few minutes : then Lady Beaumont resumed the subject.

" Mark this, Annie, I do not say what I will do ; so weighty a matter needs time for reflection ; but I engage to take charge of her, to see her provided for, or in a position to provide for herself ; to guard her, as far as lies in mortal power, from all harm. As much as this I most solemnly promise."

" I am quite content," said the sick woman, raising Lady Beaumont's hand gratefully to her lips. " Your promise was ever to be trusted ; the form your care takes I leave to your judgment and God's mercy. Would you like to see Clara ? "

" I had better do so : it would be well that I should be made known to her," answered Lady Beaumont.

The reply was characteristic. The hearts of most women would have been ready to flow forth in love to the desolate orphan ; not so

that of Lady Beaumont. Of her fidelity to her pledged word, Mrs. Lonsdale had borne testimony; her nature was a faithful one in every respect, and she had owned few affections in her lifetime. Therefore, under the influence of her old friendship, and for the sake of it, she had given the poor mother that promise of taking care of her child. But in the child herself, towards whom she had undertaken so great a responsibility, she felt no interest.

Upon the permission, however, Mrs. Lonsdale stretched out her arm, and tapped upon the wall. In answer to the signal, there promptly appeared at the door of the room the loveliest child it had ever been Lady Beaumont's fortune to behold.

"Did you want me, mamma?" said the girl, who stood modestly within the entrance, as though afraid of intruding unseasonably.

"Yes, my dear; come here."

The child—she was scarcely more—closed the door gently, and then, with perfect grace of bearing, advanced quietly to the bedside. Lady Beaumont's face took a softer expression as she marked the noble character of the young girl's beauty, and her elegance of carriage, which she had seldom seen equalled amid all the daughters of her aristocratic acquaintances.

"This is my little daughter Clara," said Mrs. Lonsdale. Her glance rested fondly for an instant upon her child, and then was turned upon Lady Beaumont to read the impression made upon her.

Lady Beaumont took the young girl's hand and greeted her kindly; marking with approbation the neatness with which her shabby frock was put on, and the grace with which her golden hair fell over her shoulders. "Will you tell her?" whispered she, bending towards her sick friend, and emphasizing her inquiry by a meaning glance.

"With your permission," was the reply. "Clara, when—when I shall have gone from you ——"

"Don't, mamma; don't speak like that!" cried the poor little girl, casting herself down beside the bed, and pressing her fresh young mouth upon her mother's, as though she would stop her lips with kisses.

"Clara, it is necessary that I should speak, and I must speak while I can," said the poor mother, to whom the scene was a great trial. In thus giving over the charge of her child to her friend, she was tasting the bitterness of the long parting soon to be.

Clara at once made a visible effort to check her sobs, and it was in rigid silence and calm that she faced her mother after a moment's struggle with herself. Lady Beaumont admired the self-control and dignity in one so young; but at the same time she came to the conclusion that it was no easy, ductile nature of which she had assumed command.

"Listen now, my love; Lady Beaumont has promised to take charge of you after—when I shall have left you," said the sick

woman in trembling accents; "and you must study to please her and to obey her in everything."

"Stay with me yourself, mamma," wailed the girl.

"My dear little daughter, I cannot; and I do not know that I would if I could. Life has not been very sweet to me," said Mrs. Lonsdale, removing her eyes from the young girl's golden head to lift them with a confiding smile to Lady Beaumont's face. "Clara, I want you now," the invalid resumed, "to promise to render the fullest, most loving obedience to Lady Beaumont in everything that she may require of you."

The young girl, whose attention hitherto had been given to her mother as entirely as though they had been alone, now turned her regard upon Lady Beaumont, and scanned her with the severest scrutiny. Lady Beaumont was perfectly aware of the criticism to which she was being subjected, but she only extended her hand, with an encouraging smile, to the young girl, who, after that keen examination of the elder lady's face, laid her soft palm confidingly in hers.

"What do you want me to say, mamma?"

"Say:—I promise always to do what you wish, Lady Beaumont; and to be guided by you in all things."

Clara, fixing her eyes earnestly upon those of Lady Beaumont, repeated the words—with an addition which they both afterwards remembered. "I promise always to do what you wish, Lady Beaumont; and to be guided by you in all things. I will try to please you before myself."

Lady Beaumont rose then to take her leave, judging wisely that the sick woman had had agitation enough, and was in need of rest. As she bent over the bed to say farewell, Mrs. Lonsdale whispered, "You need take no trouble for the present, but when you learn that she is left alone, you will fetch her away. The woman of the house is good and kind, and may be trusted till then."

"My poor friend, spare yourself; I shall see you to-morrow, and shall come often again. I wish I had known sooner of your return to England.—Can nothing be done for you?" asked Lady Beaumont, and the tears were rising to those clear, somewhat hard, eyes of hers as she spoke.

"If you mean curing me," said the invalid, with a wan smile, "nothing. But you have truly done everything in easing my heart of its great burden regarding the fate of my darling. May God bless you for your goodness!"

The first thing that Lady Beaumont did for her protégée, when, a few weeks later, she received her into her care, was to place her in a good school. Here Clara Lonsdale remained four years, spending her holidays with the ladies who were the heads of the establishment; but Lady Beaumont provided that she should have a short change and some amusement during these times. Her ladyship also called to see her at least once a week, when she was in town; at first from a

sense of duty, but shortly from inclination, for in time she became greatly attached to the girl, who, on her part, showed the prettiest devotion towards her protector. In this manner the years slipped quickly by, and it was becoming peremptory that Lady Beaumont should make up her mind concerning the ultimate destiny of her charge. No easy problem to solve, as she acknowledged to herself upon her frequent visits to Lavender Hill; for the elegant child had developed into a still more elegant girl. The question, like many others, was decided by a chance circumstance. Just before the completion of her fourth year of study, scarlet fever broke out in the school, and Clara Lonsdale had to be removed at once beyond the reach of infection.

Upon being informed of the epidemic, Lady Beaumont drove at once to Lavender Hill, and brought Clara home to her own house in Eaton Square. The exigency of the moment was chiefly answerable for this course of action, but it was not one of altogether ill-advised haste; Lady Beaumont had conceived a true affection for Clara, and would have given her a permanent home with herself, but for one consideration. She had one son, the pride and delight of her life, and whom she intended should marry well. Indeed, money in his marriage was necessary for the maintenance of his estate, impoverished by the indiscretions and vices of his grandfather. Therefore the inexpediency of bringing so attractive a girl as poor penniless Clara Lonsdale into intimate contact with him was patent to the mind of Lady Beaumont.

For the present, however, she was uninfluenced by these views, for Sir Edwin was away. He had just left upon a fishing expedition into Norway, after which it was probable that he would go to the Mediterranean in his friend's yacht. His absence from home altogether was likely to be a lengthened one. Under these circumstances, and to cheer her own loneliness, Lady Beaumont resolved, after her hurried removal from Lavender Hill, to keep Clara Lonsdale with her for a time. This she did, to their mutual satisfaction, and all might have gone well, but for an untoward event that occurred at the end of the second week.

Miss Lonsdale was sitting one afternoon in the drawing-room engaged in writing some letters for Lady Beaumont, who was gone to a meeting in connection with some charity, of which she was on the committee, when the handle of the door was softly turned, and the figure of a young man was presented to her amazed sight.

"My mother is not here?" the stranger exclaimed in tones of disappointment. "I beg your pardon," he added, courteously, to the fair scribe, who had risen in her surprise at the intrusion. "I had expected to find my mother—Lady Beaumont."

Clara Lonsdale thereupon knew that the young man was Sir Edwin Beaumont, and she scanned his handsome, dark face with fresh interest. "Lady Beaumont has gone to a committee meeting,

but it is probable that she will be in soon," said she with quiet dignity, as she resumed her seat and employment.

In the absence of being able to gratify his filial affection, Sir Edwin apparently thought it possible to solace himself with the fair nymph present; for he set to work to cultivate her acquaintance.

"Thank you; I have the pleasure of speaking to ——?"

"I am Miss Lonsdale."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Beaumont. "I ought to have had the pleasure then of making your acquaintance long ago," said he, genially, crossing the room to her side with outstretched hand.

At the warmth and kindness of his greeting a little smile of gratification flitted over her face, and shone forth from her blue eyes as they were lifted to his for a moment. Beaumont gave the soft slender fingers a hearty grasp; then drew a chair to her side for the purpose of conversation.

Sir Edwin Beaumont had the kindest, most sociable disposition, being in some respects a great contrast to his mother. He would probably have extended the same kind of welcome to the dependent protégée, let her have been what sort of girl she might; but it is doubtful whether he would have done it with the same pleasure to himself as he now experienced in meeting this beauty. The promise of loveliness that Clara Lonsdale had given in her childhood had been more than fulfilled. Sir Edwin Beaumont, as he sat there, was thinking that in all his wanderings in many lands he had never seen so fair a form. She was not over the middle height, but her figure was of exquisite proportions; her face was delicately fair, and fittingly framed in bright coils of golden hair; and, greatest charm of all, when the broad white lids were raised in a slow fashion, that was an unconscious trick of hers, a pair of the bluest eyes would look forth, straightway taking the fancy captive.

Before his mother had returned, half an hour later, their intimacy had made great strides, and his eyes were already beginning to take a very warm expression as they sought hers, while her face was kindled into a new brilliance of life and bloom. When Lady Beaumont entered the room she was already aware of the arrival of her son, having been apprised thereof by her servants. However unseasonably his return may have turned out as regards the time, no consideration of the sort could destroy her pleasure at seeing him.

"My dear boy!"

At the well-known voice, the "dear boy" lifted his head from where it had rested, in close contiguity with Miss Lonsdale's, over the book of prints upon her lap; and, jumping up, crossed the room to receive his mother's embrace.

"Here's a reception, mother! Why were you from home upon my arrival? But for Miss Lonsdale I should have had no welcome."

At the introduction of Miss Lonsdale's name perhaps Lady Beaumont's smooth brow was contracted slightly; but, if it were

there at all, the shade passed away at once, and she said : "Who, though, would have thought of your returning? What has brought you back, my son?"

"Miss Lonsdale, take note that maternal affection is a delusion of the past. Here has my mother unexpectedly regained the society of her son, and instead of a rapturous expression of joy she asks what has brought him back, as though rather aggrieved than otherwise by his return!"

It was certain now that Lady Beaumont's face darkened at this second appeal to Miss Lonsdale's présence; but Sir Edwin, ignorant of his offence, wheeled a chair up to her feet, and continued : "Sit down, and I will tell you all about it. Off the western coast we met with rough weather, and when the storm was over Mr. Jack Forrester ordered the *Seapink* home to Southampton, declaring she was in need of repairs. But we are of opinion that he only got a fright, and, notwithstanding his twelve thousand pound yacht, Mr. Jack Forrester will never again be caught on the boundless ocean."

Lady Beaumont had not availed herself of the seat to which her son had so kindly invited her, and upon his concluding his brief explanation, she moved towards the door. "I must go and get my bonnet off. There, you may carry that for me," she exclaimed, giving into Beaumont's hands a light cloak, which she had dropped from her shoulders on entering the room.

II.

LADY BEAUMONT considered the domestication of her handsome protégée under the same roof as her son rather an unfortunate combination of circumstances, but it only remained for her now to counteract the effect by keeping the young people well apart. A wise scheme, but a failure, because, like many others, adopted too late. During the easy chat of that first tête-à-tête afternoon an ineffaceable impression had been produced upon both. Beaumont's eyes sought the blue orbs of Miss Lonsdale's more and more frequently, and ever told a plainer tale of love, while his fingers would clasp hers with a more lingering pressure each night and morning; so that, almost before her suspicions were awakened, Lady Beaumont had to learn that the worst had happened.

She was reading one day in the larger drawing-room, when the entrance of two people into the adjoining room aroused her from her studies. The intruders upon her quiet were in a too blissfully absorbed state of mind to notice what doors might be open and what not; they crossed slowly to a pleasant window, filled with plants, that was within the range of Lady Beaumont's vision, and she perceived that her son was speaking eagerly and rapidly to Clara Lonsdale, while the girl only listened with drooping head and blushing cheeks.

"Clara, you must have seen that I have loved you from the first hour that we met," Sir Edwin was saying, at the same time possessing himself of Miss Lonsdale's hand.

Lady Beaumont heard the words distinctly, and saw the gesture. All her hopes hung now upon the nature of the girl's answer, and she strained her ears in an agony of suspense to catch any whisper indicating her feelings. But not the faintest accent fell from Clara's lips, and after a minute's pause it was Sir Edwin's voice which again broke the stillness.

"Beloved, promise to be mine; tell me with your own sweet lips——" he began; but now his tones were more confident, and his arm stole round Miss Lonsdale's waist.

The watcher turned sick with dismay, and pressed her hand upon her side to quiet her fast-beating heart. Stay! instead of listening in this state of anxiety for the girl's reply to his suit, was it not her proper course to prevent their coming to a mutual understanding? The truest kindness to these young people, making love in this thoughtless fashion, as though they were dwellers in Arcadia, without knowledge of such things as ancient baronetcies with insufficient revenues, or the meaning of the potent word Money?

The policy of the course clear to her mind, Lady Beaumont rose from her seat, and traversed the room with ostentatious noise, laying her hand upon the lock and turning the handle when she reached the folding-doors, as if they had never been treacherously ajar for the confusion of young lovers. Next she contrived to upset a chair immediately upon entering the inner room. She paused, and stooped to restore the article of furniture to its place—her son, with the instinct of gentlemanlike breeding, whether or not absorbed in making love, springing to her assistance.

"Here you are!" exclaimed Lady Beaumont. "Is it not a lovely day?"

"It is very fine," answered Beaumont.

"Yes; I am going to drive to Richmond, to call upon Lady Dormer. Will you come with me, Clara?"

Clara Lonsdale was unprepared with an answer, and, looking up in her embarrassment, her glance met that of Beaumont, which said most plainly, "Stay."

Lady Beaumont also saw the hesitation and telegraphy, and only acted the more decisively. "I wish you would come; I really do not feel equal this afternoon to screaming into that ear-trumpet for an hour; and the poor old lady will expect me to drink tea with her."

"Why do you go, then, mother?" asked her son.

"I promised the old lady to see her one day this week, and I have no other afternoon disengaged."

"I will go with pleasure, Lady Beaumont," said Clara, meekly.

"Come, then; the drive will be pleasant at all events," said Lady Beaumont, linking her arm within Clara's, and so carrying her off.

The drive to Richmond was made, the tea drunk, old Lady Dormer's mind refreshed—through the ear-trumpet—with the latest town gossip, and the journey home again, between the blossoming hedgerows and the brilliant June gardens, accomplished. Miss Lonsdale had been absent, and her words several times wide of the mark, but Lady Beaumont had considerably taken no heed of the fact. Her manner had been perfectly kind and affectionate, and that without effort, for she felt no enmity towards Clara. She was too just to accuse the girl, even in her own mind, of having used her position in the house to enmesh the heir thereof. Looking upon the proud, pure lineaments of her face, she knew her to be incapable of such manœuvring and duplicity; and yet, that Sir Edwin's position and rank in society would lend him value in the young girl's eyes Lady Beaumont was also aware. Clara Lonsdale was a born *fine* lady. From the first hour that she had been beneath her roof, the elder woman had perceived the fact. She had long recognized that Clara, in manner and breeding, was a gentlewoman; but it was only upon a daily association that she discovered how all her instincts were for state and pomp and elegance of life, and in her heart the old patrician loved her all the better for her tastes.

"Come to my dressing-room, my dear," said she, upon their descending from the carriage. When they had reached the room, Lady Beaumont sat down upon a low couch, drawing Clara to a place beside her, and keeping her hand kindly within her own as she began to talk.

"Clara, my son loves you; is it not true?"

A start upon the part of her victim, but no reply in words.

Lady Beaumont repeated her question, and her voice was unfaltering, albeit that she shrank from the task before her. "Is it not the case, my dear?"

"How can you expect me to inform you upon such a point!" cried Miss Lonsdale, brought to bay.

"Well, perhaps I am unreasonable in questioning you; so I will state the fact for you. Edwin does love you, and is anxious to make you his wife," said Lady Beaumont firmly, endeavouring to read the girl's face to discover in what temper she was taking the probing; but it was averted so completely as to prevent her catching sight save of one reddening cheek. "There is no one whom I should more rejoice to see his wife, or more gladly receive as a daughter, than yourself, dear," she went on to say; and now Clara Lonsdale's countenance was fully revealed. She glanced up gratefully at this point, and a happy smile broke over her face as, stooping with a swift movement, she kissed Lady Beaumont's hand, which yet held hers.

This misapprehension of her meaning so far, did not tend to facilitate Lady Beaumont's task, and it was in more hurried and disquieted accents that she resumed. "I wish you to understand this first—

my warm affection for you. Are you not assured of the sincerity of my love for you, Clara?"

"I know that your kindness for me has been unfailing; your care for me most tender," she answered earnestly, and her blue eyes were suffused with tears, which spoke her gratitude more forcibly than her words.

Lady Beaumont liked the explanation that was before her less and less. "Hush! never mind that, dear," she said, stroking the fair young cheek lovingly. "You can do more for me now than I have ever done for you. My son loves you, and, as far as my feelings are concerned, there is no one whom I should like better to have as a daughter. But, at the same time, it would be a disastrous day for us Beaumonts that Edwin should wed—I will not say you, but—a penniless bride."

"I—I scarcely understand you, Lady Beaumont," said Clara, as soon as she could bring her quivering lips to perform their office of speech.

"This is a cruel task for me," said Lady Beaumont; "but it would be of no more use my talking to Edwin than talking to the winds. No prudential consideration ever weighed with him much, and he is scarcely likely to be more reasonable in his present state of infatuation."

Her meaning was dawning with cruel clearness now to the mind of Clara Lonsdale.

"Our feelings are to go for nothing!" cried she, with a sharp pain at her heart.

"Feelings are very nice things when they go with one's bread and butter," sighed Lady Beaumont.

"What can I do? What do you expect of me?" exclaimed Clara, in a hard, dry voice.

"I expect nothing: I only ask you to remember prudence for that quixotic boy of mine."

Prudence! ay, it was easy for an ambitious mother to talk of prudence, no matter if young lives were wrecked; and as she so thought, a stubborn expression came into Clara Lonsdale's countenance, which Lady Beaumont took note of as boding ill for her mission.

"There is more necessity in this matter than perhaps you may think," said she persuasively. "My son is, for his position, a very poor man; there is a mortgage on the estate, and all sorts of troubles ahead; but I had always looked forward to a wealthy marriage setting things right, and until I perceived him to be attracted by you, I had had hopes of his marrying his cousin, Gertrude Wollaston. I do not pretend that he was ever in love with her, but he has shown much preference for her in a quiet way."

And now Lady Beaumont had raised the demon of jealousy as an adversary to herself. Her first words had been a cruel blow to the

pride of Clara Lonsdale, and to this offence was now added the mention of a rival. Clara's old feelings of loyalty, her new love to Edwin Beaumont, were fast being swallowed up in a strong tide of antagonism ; antagonism that, in a nature like hers, would lead her to carry any matter through for conquest's sake.

"I think that you are premature in any case, Lady Beaumont," said Clara, coldly ; "and, further, I think it is a subject on which you have no right to dictate to me."

"Dictate to you ! No, I suppose I have no right to dictate to you further than—— Clara !" she broke off to exclaim abruptly, "do you remember the day that you promised obedience to me ; and, of your own free will, pledged yourself to more ? The time has come when you may redeem that saying."

Clara Lonsdale tried to speak, but words failed her. She dropped her head upon her hand, which was supported on the arm of the sofa, and a whole phantasmagoria of scenes passed before her sight, awakening, by turns, conscience, memory, love.

Slowly, under these influences, the angry light died out of her eyes, the burning flush faded from her cheeks, and it was a countenance of the most absolute pallor that she turned to Lady Beaumont as she cried : "Forgive me ! forgive me ! I will do whatever you wish."

"Nay, I leave the matter in your hands," said Lady Beaumont, knowing that she had won.

III.

SIR EDWIN BEAUMONT, although he gave up an engagement to dine at home that night, could not get a word, scarce a look, from Clara Lonsdale. Only when he bade her good-night were her eyes lifted for a moment to his, and he almost started, so ice-cold was the hand she laid in his. In the morning, however, it would be easy to find her alone, he consoled himself by thinking ; but, in his feverish state of expectation, the night was long in passing, and he tossed about upon his bed waiting for the daylight. When it came, sleep had fallen upon his eyes, and it was late when he finally awoke, so that he had no opportunity of conversing with Clara Lonsdale until after breakfast.

"Clara, I have been trying to get a word with you since yesterday afternoon," he cried, reproachfully. "If you had had the least compassion in your nature you would have helped me."

"You sat within a yard of me at dinner, Sir Edwin ; and you had also the pleasure of superintending my pointlace work for two or three hours after ; I would have set aside either occupation, eating or pointlace, to attend to you."

"When my mother, Jarvis and the footmen might have had part in my remarks !"

"I should think you would have nothing to say to me but what might be heard by your mother, Jarvis and the footmen."

Sir Edwin Beaumont looked hard at her. Was this simply coquetry, or mere change of mood; or was it sober earnest, and all the past favour she had shown him base, cruel deception? An angry light shone in his eyes as he marked the coldness of her countenance, the composure of her manner, matching the indifference of her words.

"We need not pretend to misunderstand one another, Clara; I have never disguised my love for you. Why, even yesterday ——"

Clara Lonsdale trembled, and turned her head aside. "You took me by surprise," said she, interrupting him.

"Stop! there shall be no more mistake!" cried he, catching her by the hands, and wringing them hard in his intensity of feeling. "I ask you plainly, will you be my wife?"

"No." And the single word was all that she could get her trembling lips to frame. "No."

"'No!' you mean that?" Beaumont asked hoarsely.

"Certainly, I mean it, Sir Edwin."

Beaumont turned white to the very lips at her words and tone. "Then allow me to compliment you upon the completeness with which you have befooled me! But, Miss Lonsdale, next time you are at a loss for amusement, choose some less harmful pastime than breaking a man's heart, some less costly toy than the happiness of a man's whole lifetime!"

With a world of concentrated bitterness in his voice, he turned and left her. And Clara Lonsdale bore the weight of reproach, and made no sign; but added to her burden of sorrow, it was hard to endure.

The two met no more; Sir Edwin crossed the channel that night for a lengthened tour upon the Continent. Hitherto her son's wandering tendencies had caused Lady Beaumont much concern, but she saw him depart now without a pang, hoping the best from the quiet way in which he had apparently taken his rejection, and trusting that variety of scene would quickly work a complete cure. In this idea she overlooked the fact that her son, with much unlikeness, had inherited the stability and faithfulness of her own nature.

But no satisfaction upon his account could render her indifferent to the great change in Clara Lonsdale, which she could not fail to perceive. Day by day her cheeks grew more wan, and her large blue eyes larger and bluer: almost before the season was well over she carried the poor girl down to Beaumont in Northamptonshire, to see if country air would have a restorative effect; then Lady Beaumont tried society, filling the hall with guests; and next she took her to the seaside. But nothing seemed to rouse her to much life, or to bring back the faint sea-shell pink, the token of health, which had before bloomed like sweet wild roses on her cheeks.

"What does it mean? I cannot make it out," said Clara one morning to Lady Beaumont respecting a letter for herself, which with its ugly business aspect had loomed conspicuous amid Lady Beaumont's pile of elegant correspondence on the table that day. They were sitting at their late breakfast in Beaumont Hall, whither they had returned in November at Clara's solicitation.

Lady Beaumont took the sheet of paper, which Miss Lonsdale handed to her; and, adjusting her eye-glass upon her aristocratic old nose, proceeded to peruse the document. At once upon her first glance she uttered a short exclamation of astonishment: then settled herself to read the paper carefully through; Clara Lonsdale watching her with languid curiosity.

When she had mastered every word, Lady Beaumont said: "This means, I conclude, that you have come into a fortune."

"Indeed! I am glad for some reasons," was the response.

"'Glad for some reasons!' And in that indifferent tone! You are glad for *every* reason," cried the elder lady, indignantly; having learned to value money somewhat better than this foolish young creature, who thought love was all of life. "Listen, my dear," she resumed; "had you an uncle in Australia?"

"Yes, he had large mills, and was supposed to be rich."

"Then you have inherited his wealth."

"Oh! he used to deplore that he had no son to take the business after him. But we never knew much of him; mamma and he used not to get on well."

"Rich relations should always be got on well with," said Lady Beaumont sententiously.

Matters turned out according to their surmises, and Clara Lonsdale was proved to be the inheritor of a fortune of eighty thousand pounds.

"You are more than independent of me now, my dear," said Lady Beaumont.

"I do not forget, though, all you have been to me in the past," replied Clara, gratefully.

"Well, I am glad of your good fortune, child," said Lady Beaumont; "and I am punished for interfering with the dealings of Providence. But for my motives of worldly prudence, and grasping at that little wretch, Gertrude Wollaston, and her thirty thousand pounds, I might have had you for my dear daughter all the days of my life."

Our nursery classics relate to us a story of a gentleman who had the misfortune to lose his eyes as a consequence of his jumping into a quickset hedge; and how, upon the catastrophe, he straightway jumped in once more and "scratched them in again." The legend condescends to no details of the process, and, if it did, they would be quite beside the point: the precedent of the hero's consistency of conduct is all-sufficient. Now, Lady Beaumont must have been of kin to this gentleman. Just deploring having meddled with the

natural course of events, she at once began to consider how she might meddle further to retrieve her mistake, evidently believing that two wrongs will make a right; twice upon a mistaken course bring back to the first point. And in this conception Lady Beaumont was not very far out; the steady adherence to any policy will surely bring a species of success; it is your vacillating people, with their shifting, changeable ways, who drop out of life, having finally accomplished nothing.

Upon examining her hand, Lady Beaumont found that there were two cards, either of which she might play: one was to write to her son in such cunning fashion as to draw him home, and into the society of Clara Lonsdale; the other was to carry the girl abroad without delay upon the plea of her health, eventually joining Sir Edwin. Deciding upon a letter as the simpler plan, she at once concocted an ingenious epistle, wherein she expatiated upon the delicacy of Clara's health, and how she had been drooping ever since his departure: abruptly inquiring, in conclusion, if he had flirted with the child, and trifled with her affections. Lady Beaumont, reading over this epistle before its despatch, saw in herself a talent for diplomacy for which she had never been given credit.

That letter found Sir Edwin Beaumont in Rome, and its immediate result was to draw a naughty word from his lips. "Fool that I was!" he thought. "I did not give the poor child time to know her own mind; and now, perhaps, I am too late, and some other fellow has cut me out." With which he turned over his mother's letter to discover the date, and found it was one of two months back. Sir Edwin lost no more time, though; for that evening found him on his road to England. From Paris he sent a telegram to apprise those at home of his coming, and thirty-six hours later he was alighting at his own door. His mother met him in the hall; and, after she had examined him critically at sundry distances, and otherwise expressed her joy and delight at his return, she conducted him to the drawing-room.

The young man visibly started when his eyes fell upon Clara Lonsdale; he had expected to perceive some difference in her, but not this great change. The transparent pallor of the cheeks, the pathetic look of the great blue eyes, and the exceeding frailty of the previously slim figure, caused him a painful amazement.

"Good Heavens! how altered she is!" he said within himself. But the soberness of his frank countenance told her his impression with equal plainness, and she was conscious of a painful sense of humiliation thereat.

"You think me changed?" said she, when, Lady Beaumont having left the room on some care for her dear boy, the lovers found themselves alone. As she spoke, Miss Lonsdale plucked nervously at the jet trimmings of the mourning dress which she wore for her lamented uncle.

"There is a very great change in you," answered Beaumont, gravely.

"You are complimentary," said she, turning away with something very like tears of mortification in her eyes. "Have I grown so much older—become such an utter old hag in half a dozen months?" she cried petulantly.

"It is of your health I am thinking," said Beaumont, drawing nearer. "You must ever be the fairest woman in the world to me. Clara, I may as well tell you first as last, I have come home again to see if I can persuade you to revoke your former sentence. I find life to be worth nothing without you."

Miss Lonsdale offered no remark.

"Clara, put me out of suspense! Tell me my worst fate, or speak a word of hope. Can you give me a different reply now from what you did last summer?"

"Perhaps," said Miss Lonsdale, revealing a countenance rosy enough now with blushes. "You will not give me time to think."

A moment later Miss Lonsdale might with equal justice have complained that he would not give her space to breathe, so closely had he enfolded her in his arms. But apparently her deep content and happiness quenched all source of complaint, for she made none.

If her cup of joy had been capable of holding one drop more, it would have been added in a fact which came to her knowledge the next morning. The circumstance was Beaumont's knowing nothing of her change of fortune previous to his return.

"Have you told Edwin of your new fortunes, Clara?" said Lady Beaumont, not without some nervousness of manner, after breakfast the following day.

"Does he not know?" asked Clara, looking up wonderingly at the elder lady. "Have you never told him?"

"No, it was not my part; I left it to you to give him the news."

"What is it?" asked Beaumont, with a loving glance at his bride-elect. "In what have you neglected to improve my understanding?"

"Nothing of any consequence," said Clara, with a calm little smile; but her heart gave a throb of triumph at the thought that her money had lent her no fresh value in Edwin Beaumont's eyes to make her worth seeking again.

Happiness soon brought back the bloom to Clara's cheeks, and two or three months later there was a quiet wedding at Beaumont Hall, at which no heart beat more gladly than that of Lady Beaumont. Her ambition and her love both satisfied, she thought life contained nothing more to desire.

DEBTOR AND CREDITOR.

IN that tortuous and dingy street, the Rue de Suresnes, lived, a few years ago, a young couple, musicians by profession, bearing the appropriate and pastoral name of Chalumeau. If neither of them could be said to have manifested any extraordinary proficiency in their art, both were fairly endowed—he as a composer of songs and light instrumental pieces, she as a pianist—with that average amount of talent which generally enables its possessors to keep their heads above water.

So it was with Prosper Chalumeau and his wife, or rather so it would have been, were it not for a circumstance which we shall come to presently. They lived modestly and economically, more perhaps from necessity than inclination; paid their rent with tolerable punctuality, were sincerely attached to each other, and might have gone on in the same quiet way until the end of the chapter, if there had been no such date as the 15th of September, and if—which was more fatally to the purpose—they had not on that unlucky day a bill falling due of four hundred and fifty francs.

For, it is no use attempting to disguise the truth, Chalumeau was one of those good easy men who, whatever is asked of them, find it impossible to say “No.” This deplorable weakness—the bane of his life—had induced him to yield to the solicitations of an impetuous friend, and guarantee—of course, as he was assured and firmly believed, as a mere matter of form—the signature of the latter on a suspicious slip of stamped paper by the addition of his own. We should have preferred making the acquaintance of our hero at a more propitious moment; but as ill-luck will have it, exactly as our story begins, we are destined to find him perusing a hurried note from his co-respondent, reminding him that the amount would be due in a week’s time, and considerably informing him by way of postscript that as he (Trichard) couldn’t pay it, he (Chalumeau) necessarily must.

What was to be done? The musical ménage had already weathered more than one similar catastrophe, but on each occasion their credit had been considerably shaken, and it was impossible in a case like the present to have recourse to the usual remedy of renewal or part payment. No, both agreed that the money *must* be got, but how?

During the next few days the activity of the unfortunate couple was prodigious. While her husband worried one publisher after another out of their lives with offers of every imaginable species of composition, vocal and instrumental, Adèle mustered up all her little stock of trinkets, and (not without a tear of regret) carried them to

the Mont de Piété. But alas ! the total result of their united efforts barely reached half the sum required. The morning of the 14th had arrived, and they were sitting disconsolately together, racking their brains how to make up the deficit, when one of their neighbours, a painter, who occasionally dropped in for a quarter of an hour's chat and a cigarette, entered the room.

"Do you know," he said, looking round as he helped himself from his host's tobacco pouch, "that I never remarked those two engravings of yours before. Where did you get them?"

"I don't remember," muttered Chalumeau mechanically.

"They are well worth a hundred francs apiece."

"Eh ! what !" exclaimed the musician, suddenly awaking from his stupor. "What are you talking about ? what is worth a hundred francs ?"

"Each of those engravings by the window."

"You are certain ?"

"Parbleu ! I wouldn't take less than two hundred and fifty for them, if they were mine"

Ten minutes later, Chalumeau was on his way to the Quai Voltaire, bearing his treasures in their old wooden frames triumphantly under his arm. After two hours' hard bargaining, he succeeded in convincing a printseller of their rarity and value, and in disposing of them for two hundred and twenty five francs, which, according to agreement, he was to receive at his own abode in the evening.

The dealer was punctual, and before retiring to rest the now happy pair had the satisfaction of discovering that, what with the amount already collected and this unexpected windfall, they were in possession of the entire sum in bright five-franc pieces, packed in a solid canvas bag.

"By-the-by," said Chalumeau to his wife, "what is our creditor's name ?"

"Monsieur Dufour, 8, Place de la Bastille," she answered. "It doesn't say who or what he is."

"Never mind. I shall find him easily enough. I had better start the first thing to-morrow."

"Suppose we both go," suggested the fair pianist.

"Are you afraid of trusting me alone, petite ?"

"I think it will be safer," said Adèle. So that point was settled.

Early on the following morning, arm-in-arm and in the highest possible spirits, Monsieur and Madame Chalumeau set out on their expedition ; the weather was delightful, and the flower-market of the Madeline had never in their opinion looked so lovely.

"Shall we take the omnibus ?" asked Adèle. "It is a long way to the Bastille."

"On a day like this ?" cried her husband. "What with the stoppages and the heat we should be worse off than on foot. I vote for a milord."

"Too dear," said his wife, shaking her pretty head; "the walk will do us both good."

So on they trudged, carrying the bag by turns, until they had crossed the Rue Neuve des Capucines, when their progress was suddenly impeded by an obstacle in the shape of a stout gentleman with a jovial air and a remarkably loud voice.

"Hollo!" said or rather shouted the new comer, barring the passage, and tapping Prosper familiarly on the shoulder: "whither in such a hurry, my children?"

"Uncle Joseph!" exclaimed Adèle.

"Himself, mes poulets. Come into the café, a glass of something will do us all good."

"Not a bad idea!" began Chalumeau. "That is," he murmured, recollecting himself, "if we had time."

"But we really cannot stop," chimed in his wife.

"Pshaw!" cried Uncle Joseph, "a glass of madeira won't delay you a minute, and I'll take no refusal." So in they went.

One glass succeeded another, and by the time the decanter was half empty, eleven o'clock struck, and the trio began to feel hungry.

"What can you give us for breakfast, waiter?" inquired Uncle Joseph.

"Anything monsieur likes," was that functionary's encouraging answer; "eggs, cutlets, mayonnaise of lobster."

"My favourite dish!" involuntarily whispered the musician; but Adèle was inflexible, and rose from her seat.

"Not another moment," she said, "or we shall be too late. It is past eleven, and we are not a third of our way to the Bastille yet."

"That clock is too fast," coolly replied the stout gentleman, "and you have plenty of time. Besides, you are my guests, remember, and we don't meet every day."

There was no getting over this; so his niece sat down again reluctantly.

"Well," she said, "let it only be a cutlet, at all events."

"And some fried eggs," insinuated her husband.

"And the mayonnaise to wind up with," authoritatively insisted Uncle Joseph.

An hour and a quarter later, the bill, which, owing to divers supplementary additions, such as champagne and bordeaux laffitte, amounted to forty-seven francs fifty centimes, was duly presented by the waiter, and the amphitryon put his hand in his pocket.

"Sac-à-papier!" he cried, after sundry ineffectual researches; "I have forgotten my purse!"

It was too true, and what made matters worse, Uncle Joseph lived at Batignolles, and every instant was precious. There was evidently nothing to do but to open the bag, and take out fifty francs of Monsieur Dufour's money.

"Never mind," said Chalumeau to his wife, when this necessary sacrifice had been accomplished, and they were once more on the boulevard; "we are close to the Rue Richelieu. I will ask Brandus, my publisher, to lend me a fifty-franc note; and when I tell him what we want it for he can't refuse me. So wait for me in the Passage des Panoramas; I shall be there in ten minutes at latest."

"You had better leave the bag with me," observed madame.

"On the contrary, it will prove the truth of my story. When Brandus sees me with four hundred francs, he will have no pretext for not giving me the other fifty."

"I wish Prosper had followed my advice, and taken the omnibus," murmured Adèle to herself as she walked slowly away.

On arriving at his destination, Chalumeau was informed that Monsieur Brandus was engaged on some important business in his private room, but would see him presently. At that moment, a young man who was on the point of leaving the shop, hearing his voice, turned round, and Prosper recognised one of his brother artists.

"Tiens," he exclaimed, "Adolphe! Why, how pale you look!" he continued: "what has happened?"

The other grasped his hand convulsively. "It was my last hope," he said, "and it has failed me! A hundred francs would have enabled me to save from seizure the few wretched articles of furniture still in my possession, and given bread to my wife and child. We have not tasted food for eight-and-forty hours!"

"Hush!" interrupted Chalumeau, taking him aside into a corner of the shop, and hurriedly untying the canvas bag.

"You have kept me waiting a long time," said Adèle, when her husband at length rejoined her in the Passage des Panoramas. "Did Monsieur Brandus give you the money?"

"Not exactly," he replied, and related to her what had passed. She would have done the same herself, and therefore had not the heart to reproach him; but there was no denying it, their position had become extremely embarrassing, and the clock at a watchmaker's on the boulevard marked twenty minutes to four.

"If we only knew what sort of a man this M. Dufour was!" reflected Adèle. "However, there is but one thing to be done; we must take him the three hundred francs, and propose a fresh bill for the remainder. I see no other way."

"Nor I," said Chalumeau.

They had now reached the Boulevard-Nouvelle, and while the musician was mechanically glancing towards the Gymnase Theatre opposite, and wishing he could get a little operetta of his composition played there, his wife was intently examining the novelties exposed in a haberdasher's window.

"What a pretty dress!" she suddenly exclaimed, nudging her husband's arm. "Look, Prosper, exactly the colour that suits me."

You promised me a new one a year ago, and you really ought to keep your word."

"Hum ! and what will Dufour say ?"

"Dufour must be satisfied with two hundred instead of three ; a little more or a little less comes to very nearly the same thing."

The argument, though fallacious, proved irresistible ; the dress was purchased, and the bill made out.

"Bless me !" cried Chalumeau in a tone of dismay, "where's the bag ? I must have left it at Brandus's. Stay here till I come back, I sha'n't be many minutes," he added, rushing out of the shop.

When he arrived at the Rue Richelieu, he discovered that the object of his search had been carefully put on one side by the music-seller's assistant ; and in the first transport of his delight insisted on treating the latter to a glass of punch at an adjoining café. In the meantime Adèle, having nothing better to do, amused herself by selecting forty or fifty francs' worth of collars, cuffs, and such like trifles.

"You won't scold me, Prosper," she whispered on the prodigal's return.

"Scold you, ma chatte !" he replied ; "why, see here." And he showed her a pair of sleeve buttons he had bought for himself on his way back.

Six o'clock struck as they came to the Boulevard du Temple. Chalumeau was unusually silent, and mechanically jingled the canvas-bag, now three parts empty, as he walked along. Suddenly he stopped short.

"What are you thinking about ?" inquired Adèle.

"I am thinking that I invited Fatout to dine with us."

"Who is Fatout ?"

"Brandus's assistant, who put the bag by for me. I couldn't do otherwise than ask him to dinner—oh, don't be alarmed," he went on, noticing her look of annoyance, "quite quietly, you understand, no extras, nothing of the sort. He was to meet us at Bonvalet's at six."

"But Dufour ?" objected Adèle.

"Dufour will be in better humour after dinner than before, and more likely to hear reason. I shouldn't be surprised if he consented to renew the bill."

"I should," thought his wife, but prudently held her peace, and dutifully followed her liege lord into the restaurant, where Monsieur Fatout, who awaited their arrival at the entrance, had already engaged a private room.

Notwithstanding Chalumeau's previously expressed intentions, the dinner, simple enough at the outset, gradually began to assume the proportions of a Gargantuan feast ; their guest, though he said little, and that not particularly to the purpose, ate enormously, and professed a peculiar liking for rare and expensive vintages. The potage Crécý was succeeded by a variety of dishes which M. Fatout, who had

obligingly volunteered to act as caterer, recommended with all the enthusiasm of a gourmet; and the appetising odours of which little by little overcame the few remaining scruples of his entertainer. The modest bottle of ordinaire was unanimously voted unworthy of the occasion, and superseded by richly-flavoured chambertin and more than one sample of "la veuve clicquot;" and by the time that coffee and liqueurs were handed round, and the bill discharged (thereby reducing the contents of the bag to four five-franc pieces), Chalumeau discovered that it was eleven o'clock, and high time to think of returning to the Rue de Suresnes. Leaving, therefore, M. Fatout, whose potations had slightly incapacitated him from knowing what he said or did, to get home as he could, our couple started without him; and, either from sheer inattention or (as Adèle subsequently remarked) conducted by destiny, turned to the right instead of to the left, and a quarter of an hour later found themselves, to their infinite astonishment, on the Place de la Bastille.

Just at that moment the rain, which had already announced itself by certain ominous drops, came down in torrents; and perceiving a café close at hand, they determined to seek refuge there until the storm had abated. Ordering a mazagran for himself and an ice for Adèle, Chalumeau fell into conversation with the proprietor of the establishment, the only person present, except a sleepy waiter; and, the weather holding out no immediate sign of improvement, proposed a game of bézique, which the other willingly agreed to. Before twenty minutes had elapsed, the canvas bag was once more opened, and the four remaining coins, composing, ice and mazagran included, the exact amount due to the owner of the café, came rattling down on the marble table.

"There goes my last sou," said our hero, with a sigh of relief. "Put on your shawl, Adèle, and we will wish monsieur good evening."

"Impossible!" demurred his late adversary, "you can't go on foot; madame will be drenched. Antoine, call a citadine from the stand."

"Oui, Monsieur Dufour," replied the waiter from a corner of the room, where he had been in a state of semi-somnolence ever since the game began.

"Dufour!" exclaimed Chalumeau, involuntarily starting from his chair, while his wife in her confusion let fall her shawl-pin, and stared open-mouthed at the cafetier.

"At your service," said the individual in question, considerably astonished at the sensation excited by his name. "May I ask if I have the pleasure of being known to you?"

"Too well," muttered the musician, "four hundred and fifty times too well! See here, monsieur," he continued, pointing to the empty bag, "what comes of walking instead of taking the omnibus."

"Excuse me," remarked M. Dufour, who began to doubt his visitor's sanity; "I really do not understand."

"You will soon, when I tell you that I am Chalumeau, Prosper Chalumeau."

The proprietor of the café shook his head. "Never heard the name before in all my life!" he said.

"But the bill?"

"What bill?"

"The bill of exchange which ought to have been paid to-day, but wasn't."

"We are at cross purposes, my good sir," observed Dufour. "If you allude to Monsieur Trichard's bill for four hundred and fifty francs, it was duly taken up and settled this morning."

"By whom?" inquired Chalumeau, completely puzzled. "Surely not by himself?"

"Well, not exactly, but very nearly the same thing. By his father-in-law that is to be, Monsieur Robillard, of the firm of Saucrotte and Robillard, Rue Hauteville, a most respectable house. The old gentleman was here as the clock struck ten, and had a glass of vermouth before he went away. He told me that the marriage was only decided on a day or two ago, much against his will, for it appears that Trichard hasn't a sou in the world. But Madame and Mademoiselle Robillard have voted him charming ever since they heard him sing a romance of his composition—'Brise du soir,' I think he said ——"

"His composition!" cried Chalumeau. "It is mine, every note of it, music and words into the bargain. He borrowed it from me to show it to a publisher, and passes it off as his own. Never mind; I forgive him, more particularly as he is not likely to want any more bills backed; and ——"

"The citadine is at the door," interrupted Antoine.

"But, mon ami," whispered Adèle, glancing at the bag, "you forget ——"

"True," assented her husband, after an ineffectual search in his pockets; "pas une obole! What is to be done?"

"Be easy on that score," said Dufour, who had overheard the colloquy, "the fare is paid already."

"And it is written in the book of fate," responded Chalumeau, shaking his new acquaintance cordially by the hand, "that I am still to remain your debtor!"

CHARLES HERVEY.



TWO LITTLE WOODEN SHOES.

ONLY a peasant of Flanders,
 Sweet as the southern breeze,
 Singing a glad "good morn" to her friends—
 The birds and the happy bees.
 Fair bloom the roses and mignonette;
 And the lupins, blue as the skies,
 Have borrowed a double meed of life
 From the light of her sparkling eyes.
 And merrily pass the hours away:
 In work and song day follows day.

One sunny morn of a golden May
 There came to the market-place
 A painter, with eyes as blue as her own,
 And they fell on the fair young face.
 All through the pleasant summer-time
 Her heart to his replied;
 But the flowers that once her garden decked,
 Neglected, drooped and died.
 Still merrily pass the hours away:
 In the light of love day follows day.

There seems a strife in the chiming bells,
 A din in the murm'ring streams,
 For never again will she see his face,
 Save in the world of dreams.
 'Tis the old, old story, ever told
 By many a broken heart—
 An hour of bliss, an age of grief;
 "They met—but only to part."
 Oh, wearily pass the hours away!
 In the gloom of death day follows day.

The years roll on; one Autumn eve
 He stands by the wicket-gate,
 Where they linger'd o'er many a sad good-bye:
 Too late! he comes too late.
 The garden, that blossomed so sweet and bright,
 Is dark as the shade of yews;
 When he sought her they showed him a dead moss rose,
 And two little wooden shoes.
 Oh, drearily pass the hours away!
 So runs the world from day to day.

GEORGE STRONACH.



THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONSULTING THE ORACLE.

THE success of Professor Dangerfield, during the London season which had just reached its close, had been such as to surpass his most sanguine hopes. He had suddenly found himself the fashion; and by whatever means he had become so, the advantage was too great not to be used to the utmost. On the evening when he held his public séances, a crowd of carriages blocked up the street; and engagements for private consultations had to be made weeks beforehand. But, the season being over, the attendance had become more slack; and it was supposed that he would very shortly leave town himself, and carry his philosophy and its superhuman agencies to the seaside. And indeed, the stifling heat of that August evening, as Mrs. Archdale and Cecilia Wilmot drove up, made the former observe it was difficult to believe anyone would be in London by choice who could possibly get away. She was rather in hopes of finding the oracle had really closed its shrine for the present; especially when she perceived that there was no other carriage at the door.

"We are too late, my dear; let us turn back at once," said Mrs. Archdale, with an eagerness that showed how willingly she would have escaped the proposed adventure; but to this Cecilia turned a deaf ear. Leaving the maid in the cab, they alighted, and Cecilia's hand was reaching to the bell-handle, when the door noiselessly opened, and stood open for them to enter. With a glance of half-amused surprise at each other, they stepped in, and it closed behind them

immediately. They were in a small, well-lighted hall, with a staircase to the left, and a glass door facing them; but a curtain was drawn behind the door, and there were no signs of any porter, or servant, of whom to make enquiries.

"We had better go upstairs," whispered Cecilia, for the strangeness of this reception unconsciously hushed her vivacity; and without waiting for a reply, she led the way. The carpet on the stairs was soft to their feet, and there was a faint smell like incense, or pastilles, as they ascended. On reaching the landing, they paused in doubt, but only for a moment. A door on the right opened silently as the outer one had done, and admitted the ladies into an apartment, whose coolness and fragrance formed a refreshing contrast with the atmosphere outside. A silver scone on a pedestal in one corner alone gave it light: but the window opened into a conservatory, illuminated by coloured lamps; they shed a soft hue over leaves and flowers, and added materially to the effect on the senses of the spectators. Sitting down in silence, waiting for whatever was to happen next, they did not venture even to look at each other, for fear of betraying what either would have been ashamed to own. Before their nerves had had time to harden into indifference, the sound of low, plaintive music completed the fascination, and it was with a thrill that partook largely of fear, that they suddenly found the Professor standing by them without any means of discovering how or when he entered the room.

He was considerably changed since they had last seen him. His deep mourning appeared only in keeping with the paleness of his countenance and the lines of care and suffering on his features. His hair, too, showed deep streaks of white; he stooped a little, and leaned on a gold-headed cane for support. As the music died away, he drew a chair forward and sat down, facing his visitors; who, as yet, had not mustered courage to speak or move.

"Mrs. Archdale—Miss Wilmot—you have honoured me with a visit at last. I have expected you some time. What can I do for you?"

"If you have expected us, Professor," returned Mrs. Archdale, recovering spirit, "you probably know that better than we do. We are come, like the rest of the world, to test your power."

"I remember, in our last interview," he replied, "you named a test that you would consider conclusive. But you are mistaken if you suppose my power, as you call it, is at the beck and call of every curious visitor. There are times when I can neither do nor show anything. To-night it is otherwise. All nature around us is alive, conscious of agencies at work; the animals are uneasy—the birds are wakeful—the flowers give out stronger scent. The very air is full of sounds, and weighs heavily on the burdened brain. It is on such nights that those gather round us whom we may not avoid, if we would."

"I had no idea," said Mrs. Archdale, demurely, "that the

weather had anything to do with your science. I supposed it was only our unfortunate flesh and blood that was dependent on English climate."

The Professor smiled; as one who would not deign to argue with ignorance.

"When you can explain to me why flesh and blood are themselves affected by atmospheric causes, I may be able to tell you something of what surprises you now. Meanwhile, the facts remain, and they accumulate an amount of evidence far beyond our means of collecting and studying them. You came here to test my power, you say. The challenge is not to me—but to those who may be listening—who may have brought you to this house. I give you your choice—will you go as you came, or carry through what you have begun?"

Before either of the visitors could answer, there arose a low moaning, as if the wind were rising, though the leaves in the conservatory remained motionless. There was nothing startling in the sound itself; but in the change in the Professor's manner there certainly was. He stood up, with his right hand lifted for a moment; and then turned to the ladies with a look of serious warning.

"I was mistaken; you have not time now to draw back; you must go on. Do not be frightened; remember that I am your friend, pledged to your service; and if you follow my directions without questioning, all will be perfectly safe. Come!"

He moved towards the conservatory as he spoke, and they followed closely; Cecilia holding her friend's hand, and squeezing it occasionally in her excitement, but not venturing to speak. A curtain they had not perceived before drew back as they approached. It admitted them into a tiny theatre; on one of the circular seats of which they were desired to take their places. The stage, if such it were, was concealed by its curtain, and there was only a dim light from some arrangement of lamps unseen. Their host had disappeared, and they were left to muse on their equivocal position; musings which soon found relief in critical whispers.

"Theatrical, of course; anyone can see he is an actor," said Mrs. Archdale. "That music and wind behind the scenes might all belong to the Dissolving Views in the Polytechnic. I hope he does not really believe we are so easily frightened."

"What would Mr. and Mrs. Bourne say if they saw us?" whispered Cecilia. "I would give something to have them both here, just to look at their faces. But there is one good point in the entertainment: they do not keep us long waiting. There, the light is being covered—that is quite correct; only hold my hand tight, for one cannot tell what they may be going to do."

The soft music had recommenced, and as the necessary darkness was attained, a row of foot-lamps shone on the stage, and the curtain rose.

Was it illusion—natural magic—or theatrical effect? For a

moment Mrs. Archdale hardly knew; but there sat a well-known figure—the head, with its white hair covered by a soft net cap, slightly bent forward—the hands clasped on her knee—the attitude that of a person lost in thought: but the whole effect so vividly real that the beholder made an involuntary movement as if to rise. It was checked instantaneously by a hand on her arm and the Professor's low voice in her ear. "Hush! be careful. You recognise her—that is enough."

In spite of pride, courage, and intellect, in spite of all she knew about skilful manipulation of mirrors and magnifiers, Mrs. Archdale could not repress a slight quivering of nerves: and when Cecilia whispered the question, "Who is it?" with difficulty replied, "My mother—a facsimile of her portrait."

"Take care!" said the warning voice again, as the figure began to grow indistinct. "You have seen her thinking—will you see her thoughts?"

"Do *you* take care," was Mrs. Archdale's almost indignant reply, though she kept the same guarded tone, "how you presume to handle a subject so sacred. It must be easier to show me her face than to enter into her mind."

"You shall judge for yourself," spoke Professor Dangerfield.

He gave a sign, and the form melted away, leaving another in its place, wrapped in a cloak that concealed all but the head, which was that of a boy. Lividly pale, the hair thrown wildly back, the eyes fixed with strange intensity as on some thrilling object in the distance, it was still the face of Paul. He might have been a portrait too, for the rigid stillness of every limb.

"Will you question him, as to what he sees—or shall I?" asked the voice at Mrs. Archdale's side.

"Do it your own way," was her impatient answer, "and I shall judge the better of your knowledge."

"Listen then, and judge. Paul! Is anyone here of whom that venerable lady was thinking?"

The boy's voice came back in a singularly metallic tone, every syllable distinct, though monotonous.

"There is a dark man passing with a child in his arms. He is standing now by the sea-shore; he carries something under his cloak. They are getting into a boat. Now I see him on board a small ship—the waves are rolling high—the wind is blowing—he keeps the child wrapped up in his cloak—and points to the shore. Oh, a storm is coming on! There! the ship is dashed against the rocks. I have lost him."

"Wait—and look again," said his master. "She remembered more than that."

"I see him now; and the little girl. They are in a place that looks like an office; a young man is talking to him—he counts him out some money. A mist has come over everything—she has forgotten the rest"

The boy's voice ceased. Mrs. Archdale sprang up.

"Is the man there still?"

"Hush!" said the Professor, again laying his hand on her arm. "Wait a moment. The boy will see him if he is. Paul! leave her thoughts. Go to his. Quick—now!"

The boy seemed to gasp and sob for breath, as he struggled to obey. "He knows he is ill, and has very little time, with a great deal to do. He wants to place her with her mother's friends, but he has no money—what he had has been lost in the wreck; he has only saved a box, with silver clamps. They are putting seals upon it, and the man in the office gives him a paper, and locks up the box in a cupboard.—It is all gone again."

"No, no—impossible! He must tell me more," gasped Mrs. Archdale, as the large drops of emotion stood on her brow. "If he can tell me where that box is——"

"Command yourself; he will try," said the Professor: "but this is exhausting work and he will not hold out much longer. Do you see him now, Paul?"

"Yes—he is lying on a bed—he can hardly breathe—he is cold—he is burning—he is dying. The young man has come to his bedside, and stoops over him, but shakes his head. I cannot go on—I am feeling ill."

"Rest."

Another sign was given; the boy disappeared; and as the curtain descended, the gas lamps were turned up, and the ladies could see each other's faces. Mrs. Archdale turned to question the Professor. But he had vanished also.

A few moments of silent expectation followed, and then Cecilia, perceiving that the door was wide open, whispered that it must be a hint that all was over.

Mrs. Archdale gave a sigh of impatience, and gazed around. There was no one visible of whom an explanation could be asked: yes, it must be over; and all they could do now was to retire as quickly as possible. The doors opened before them, as if in a fairy tale; but on reaching the hall, they perceived that one important ceremony had still to be gone through. A box with a slit in the lid, stood conspicuously on the table; and as soon as each lady had slipped in her offering, the hall-door opened, not widely, but just allowing egress, and closing the instant they had crossed the threshold.

The cab was still where they had left it, and the friends were soon on their way home. Neither spoke a word until they were safely indoors: and then Mrs. Archdale's first request was that Cecilia would not discuss the subject that night.

"I candidly confess that it has agitated me," she said, "and until I have thought it well over, I would rather not speak of it at all."

Next morning the breakfast hour was later than Mr. Bourne would have approved, and the letters were taken up to each lady's room,

before they met for the meal. Miss Wilmot saw at a glance that, whatever might have been the evening's agitation, morning had done nothing to lessen it for Mrs. Archdale. Her eyes bore the traces of tears; her manner was troubled and uneasy. She talked, as her habit was when her nerves were excited, on every imaginable subject, save the one of which Cecilia was thinking; and so rapidly that the latter had scarcely an opportunity of putting in a word.

It was really a relief to both when the door bell rang, and the servant came in to say that Mr. Frankland had called with a parcel for Miss Wilmot, and begged to know how she was? An eager summons was sent out to him at once, and he was received with a warmth of welcome that must have removed all fear, had he felt any, of being intrusive.

"I was coming up to town," he explained, "on business, and just at the last moment heard that Miss Wilmot was detained here under Mrs. Archdale's care, by indisposition; so I promised Sir Marcus and Kate to enquire as soon as possible, and send them a bulletin. Was it all a false alarm? Except that you are so late at breakfast, I can see no symptoms worth mentioning."

"You are paying my nurse and doctor the highest compliment, and if you can persuade your conscience to try a second breakfast, I can recommend Mrs. Archdale as a tea-maker whom you cannot take at a disadvantage," returned Cecilia. "She has always a reserve of power ready to meet an attack, no matter how unexpected."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Frankland, gravely; and a look at the lady in question was met by one from her, expressive either of warning or enquiry—he could not tell which. Mrs. Archdale did not repeat the glance, but busied herself with the hospitable duty assigned her, leaving Cecilia to support the conversation, which she was ready enough to do.

"And you have actually carried this dear little fern all the way, you benevolent philosopher! It is all the kinder of you, that I am convinced you despise ladies for making a fuss about ferns—just because they are the fashion."

"I despise no one for caring about a plant, Miss Wilmot. You are not obliged to describe it botanically, if you will only take care and keep it alive. Emily dug it up herself on purpose for you, because she heard you once say you wished for one."

"Very good of the dear child. How has she been lately?"

"Better for wholesome training, and freedom from trials of nerve. They have good hopes she will outgrow all her weakness, if those spirits let her alone."

"Take care what you say about the spirits," cried Miss Wilmot, quickly. "They can do very curious things. I only wish you had called yesterday. You should have gone with us, to be convinced, as we were."

"What have you been convinced of? Your own wisdom—or the reverse?"

"That is a question not to be answered in a hurry. Let it suffice you that we both went last night to test the Professor, in his own house ; and that we have not yet ventured to speak to each other of what we saw and heard."

"He must be cleverer, then, than I gave him credit for," added Mr. Frankland. "Is it fair to ask what you did see and hear?"

"Ask Mrs. Archdale. She and the invisible ones seemed to be on intimate terms last night, and she can explain what I could not."

"There was much more than I could explain at present," said Mrs. Archdale, reluctantly. "I own that, going as I did, thoroughly prejudiced, I was almost startled into credulity. Mr. Frankland shall judge for himself, if he be really curious on the subject."

Mrs. Archdale related the whole adventure we have already described ; and with a fulness of detail that showed what a hold it had taken on her imagination. Lewis listened with great interest, refraining from comment till the end. He then asked if she could at all account for Mrs. Raymond's likeness being in such hands.

"That is one point that is perplexing me," she replied, "for I cannot find the one I always have by me. Cecilia, my love, I was showing it to you yesterday, before I went out. Do you remember where it was put afterwards?"

"Oh dear, yes ; I locked it up in my table drawer," was the ready answer. "I will fetch it directly"—and Miss Wilmot hastened away. Mrs. Archdale looked after her, and gave an involuntary sigh.

"Did you see Ernest before you started, Mr. Frankland?"

"Not alone. I never had the chance. There was something I particularly wanted to know from himself."

"Can I supply the omission? Is it anything that concerns you?—or him?"

"It so far concerns us both, that, much as I value his good opinion and friendship, I should have risked them both on the answer."

"Then it is something that touches his honour, and his mother ought to be able to answer for him. Perhaps we are both thinking of the same subject. I heard from Grasmere this morning, and I believe the news I received was no secret there."

"It is all settled, then?" said he, abruptly.

"Well, my son naturally asks my consent, having his grandmother's approval ; but he knows well enough that I should never oppose his wishes, whatever might be my own. I only feel that it is a very unhopeful prospect, as far as their means are concerned, and I did think that something brighter was in store for him than a long engagement, and but little chance of ever being rich enough to marry."

"That is your only objection, then?" asked Lewis, with a degree of impatience in his tone, which she did not fail to observe.

"The only one I have a right to make. He is perfectly unfettered and free to choose ; nor can I say that his choice is an unworthy one. I think highly of Miss Granard in every respect ; save as to fortune."

"That sounded like a congratulation," said Miss Wilmot, re-entering. "Is it a matter of special interest to Mr. Frankland, Miss Granard's gallant preserver?"

The others exchanged a glance, as they had once before; and Mrs. Archdale, after a moment's hesitation, replied gravely, that a true friend like Mr. Frankland could not but be interested in the happiness of others. "He has been the first to offer me his good wishes for my son; and I must now ask for yours, my dear Cecilia."

She knew the blow would fall heavily: but by inflicting it thus, in public, the young lady's pride, perhaps her resentment, would come to her support. Though Cecilia unconsciously sat down, and had a moment's difficulty in drawing her breath, she kept up a brave appearance, and said it was only what she had expected to hear, after Mr. Archdale's desertion of the Bournes.

"But how could you keep such news to yourself till this minute, dear Mrs. Archdale? I saw something was on your mind, but I laid it all down to the spirits and the Professor."

"Ernest's letter was a surprise to me, my love," said the lady, unable to repress the tears that started to her eyes, "and I could not talk about it at first. It certainly was not a premeditated step on his part, or he would have told me before he went to Grasmere: they have been thrown together, and matters have settled themselves without consulting prudence. My dear mother is so pleased that I cannot damp her joy."

"Then, that was what she was thinking of when we saw her last night," said Miss Wilmot with mock seriousness; "and I do not know what you will say when I tell you that I cannot find the key of my table drawer anywhere. I must have dropped it when I was out. I only hope it was not on the Professor's premises, for the drawer is full of my secrets."

"I will go and see if one of mine will fit the lock," said Mrs. Archdale, glad to escape from the room. To her, Cecilia's forced gaiety was more trying than if she had seen her in tears.

The instant she was gone, Cecilia turned to Lewis, her manner strangely eager.

"Mr. Frankland, you are always kind and considerate; will you do me a great favour?"

"Anything that I can."

CHAPTER XXVI.

LEWIS'S MISSION.

It was, perhaps, a little disappointing to Lewis Frankland to find that Miss Wilmot only wanted him to execute a commission, though she owned, with a faint, uneasy smile, that it must be kept secret.

"If you could do me this service, it will be a real obligation, Mr. Frankland, and there are a few people in the world to whom it is

a pleasure to feel obliged. No, do not bow and thank me till you know what a troublesome thing you have to do. I expected a box to be left here for me this morning, and it is not come."

"And you wish me to see after it. All right. At which station?"

"At no station, but at a chemist's in Holborn. If you would be so very kind as to take this note—you will see the address—and bring back the box which Mr. Cloud will give you, I shall ask you to let nobody see it but myself, and to give it to me in private."

"That is quite sufficient, Miss Wilmot; I will go at once," said he, suppressing all surprise.

"I may tell you," she added, "that the box will contain some rather dangerous chemicals, for an experiment I am trying. Until I am sure of success, I do not wish anyone to know what I am about; and I am at a standstill for want of them. You are good-nature itself, so I do not mind telling *you*. Even if I were to make a complete failure—in every way—I know you would be too full of kindness to laugh at me."

His answer was to take her hand. For one second, she laid her other hand on the back of his, and glanced in his face; where the most respectful compassion and sympathy were too plainly shown to be mistaken. But not a word was said on the subject in both their minds, the engagement of Ernest to Miss Granard. Mr. Frankland hurried away to do her errand, promising to return to luncheon and be at their command all day.

"Poor bird!" he thought, as he strode along the streets, "the arrow has found its mark, but she hides the wound well. I only hope that this dabbling with chemistry is not playing tricks with her health. She certainly does not stand in need of beautifying lotions, for I never saw a sweeter complexion. Poor little thing! she wants a good adviser and friend. I wish Kate could have had her to train and comfort as Miss Granard has Emily."

Mr. Cloud was not in the shop, and Lewis had some little time to wait, even after the youth behind the counter had found leisure to summon him. At last he appeared, and on learning Mr. Frankland's errand, begged him to step into the surgery. Which, of course, Lewis did; keeping a heedful watch on Cloud the while, and revolving all he had heard from the Archdeacon and Sir Marcus.

In fact, Cecilia's errand, little as she suspected it, had given Lewis the opportunity he had wanted: and he was not the man to let any chance escape for want of energy. He waited quietly while Cloud read the note, with some difficulty, as it appeared, through his blue spectacles; and when it was being folded up, he asked if the box were ready, as he would take it back with him.

"I was in the act of packing it for Miss Wilmot," was the reply, "but these things take time, and require care. You are acquainted with the contents of the box?"

"I know thus much," said Lewis, "that they are chemicals,

connected with some experiment; and I only hope they are not dangerous, considering they are for a lady's use."

"I will not go so far as to say that, sir. The experiment is a dangerous one, and I should not recommend its being tried too often."

He was sealing up a small flat box, while he spoke. Handing it to the young schoolmaster, he added with a smile: "As you are in the young lady's confidence, I need not remind you that this should be delivered in private."

"That is understood. Is there anything to be settled?" added Lewis, seeing the dispenser making a calculation on paper.

Mr. Cloud looked up, as if surprised. "The fee is ten guineas," he replied, and went on with his notes, as if it were the simplest matter in the world.

"Ten guineas!" repeated Lewis, who, however he might be disconcerted, took care not to appear so. "That is nearly as much as you would receive for a surgical operation, Mr. Mowatt."

The dispenser's start was undeniable; his hands shook so much that he could not write; he tried to speak, but seemed unable to control the muscles of his throat. Turning away from the visitor, he went to a closet, and swallowed a mouthful from a small phial; then, after a short hesitation, removed his spectacles, and looked steadily at Lewis.

"Perhaps it would have been more courteous to have respected my wish of remaining unknown; men do not disguise themselves without a reason; but as you do know me, I may ask how you came by your knowledge?"

"By no treachery on anyone's part," said Lewis, good-humouredly; "you betrayed yourself to a great authority by your treatment of my friend Archdale after his accident. I promised Sir Marcus Combermere when I came to town that I would look you up, and try to deliver a message: which I will do now, if you will allow me."

"Wait, sir!—one moment!" said Mowatt, in violent agitation. He paced up and down the small apartment as if struggling to overcome some fierce emotion, to which he durst not give way. Once he seemed on the point of leaving the room. But he changed his purpose, sat down with his head turned away from Lewis Frankland, and his clenched hand resting on the table.

"Now, sir, if you will be good enough to deliver your message, I am ready to hear it. I have borne much already—I can bear a little more."

"If I have offended, or pained you, Mr. Mowatt, I sincerely ask your pardon. I had no intention of doing either. Two valued friends have talked of you to me, and I promised to see you myself, if possible. They would have selected a different messenger, could either of them have entertained a wish to add to your trials."

Mowatt bowed slightly, but seemed resolved not to speak, and again glanced irresolutely at the door.

"So far from this being the case," continued Lewis, "I believe I can give you the exact words which Sir Marcus used. 'A man of his abilities,' he said, speaking of you, 'ought not to be left in a position where he may be tempted, perhaps forced, to be the tool of others. If a brother surgeon's helping hand can save him, tell him he has only to stretch out his own.'"

"He said that—Sir Marcus Combermere?"

"He did; in the presence of Archdeacon Burleigh: who added his own message afterwards: 'Tell him from me,' were his words, 'that I have to thank Professor Dangerfield for a sharp lesson, which I ought to have learnt sooner; and that if Mr. Mowatt wishes to comfort an old man who has had his share of sorrow, he will let him shake one hand while Sir Marcus takes hold of the other.'"

"He has forgiven me, then?" said Mowatt, in a choked voice.

"If you know the nature of the man you need not ask that question. He does nothing by halves. If he thinks he has wronged you by his past resentment, he will not rest till he has made amends. Come, Mr. Mowatt," added Lewis, "I am a younger man than you, and have no authority to give you advice, but I can see that with two such friends, and, I may add, a third in myself, you have no reason to be downhearted. It is a long lane that has no turning, and if you really have a mind for a fresh start, here it is ready. I am authorised to smooth away difficulties as far as I possibly can."

He stretched out his hand, which Mowatt grasped in his, held tightly for a moment, and then let fall; his head dropping at the same time on his crossed arms, while his shoulders shook with passionate sobs. Lewis Frankland watched him anxiously, but refrained from checking the emotion: which might be a wholesome relief. Mowatt himself was the first to speak again.

"God bless you," he said, as he lifted his face from the table, "for your own kindness, and for the words you have repeated. Nobody knows but myself what it is to hear them, for nobody else knows what my life has been. But I can give you no other answer now. Unless it be this; to both your friends: Don't be so long another time, if you wish to save a miserable man—for it may be too late."

"I will not believe it," said Lewis; "it is never too late this side the grave. But I will leave you to think it over, and there is my card, if you like to look me up. I shall be a few days longer in town, and anything I can do I will."

Mowatt took the card, and, with a slight bend of the head, put it in his waistcoat pocket.

"And now about Miss Wilmot's business. I have not ten guineas about me at this moment, but here are two; and the balance——"

"There is no balance, Mr. Frankland. Two guineas are quite sufficient; and I beg you will not mention it again. If the lady will take my advice, she will give up these experiments, as they are more dangerous than she is aware of."

"I will tell her what you say," answered Lewis; and with another grasp of the hand they parted.

As the door closed behind the visitor, Mowatt sank down into his seat, his elbows on the table, his forehead resting on his hands. He did not stir, even when an inner door opened, and Cosmo Dangerfield, after cautiously reconnoitring the ground, entered, and stood at the other side of the table.

"A most touching scene—worthy of the stage," was the first remark of the Professor, after waiting for the other to speak. Mowatt slowly raised his head, but made no reply.

"A very clever, plausible move, I grant you," continued Cosmo, "and worthy of the men. You might have starved long enough in Belgium, Mowatt, before such generous hands would have been held out to you had they not suspected you were growing dangerous."

"I said it came too late," replied Mowatt, unable to repress a heavy sigh. "You are witness that I accepted nothing."

"True; I am witness; and very much edified I was by your behaviour. A very little more, and I should have joined the party, to ask if there was to be no place for me in such a general reconciliation. I can weep, if necessary, as touchingly as the best of you."

"Don't try it here, then, for I am on my own ground, and you might find tears unwholesome. It is quite enough to keep faith with you—I am not bound to stand insult."

"What do you call these messages, then?" demanded the Professor. "I spoke as I did to see if you had a spark of spirit left. What! send a young prig of a tutor to a man like you, with a verbal message implying, of course, that the wrong-doing was all on your side, and they were generously disposed to forgive you, now they found you might be up to something worse! and proposing that you should lead a new life, eating the bread of those who robbed you of your own! Is that such generosity that you can afford to crawl on your knees to receive it? It does not strike me in that light."

"Never mind how it strikes you. The words were kind, and I seldom hear such now, so it is no wonder I was a little upset. I shall not expose myself to another trial. Now I am discovered, this berth will suit me no longer."

"You are right, Mowatt. I have another ready for you."

"Where?"

"Can't you guess? I should have thought you might have seen the opening directly. My dear fellow, the ball is at your foot, and nothing hinders you from a splendid innings."

"If you will be a little more explicit," said Mowatt, wiping his forehead, "it will save your time and my patience."

"I will not waste either. As you justly observe, your place here must be given up. What is to hinder you from availing yourself of this opportunity, and by denouncing and renouncing me, winning golden opinions from all those whom I may count as my enemies?"

"Several things are against it," answered Mowatt. "To name only one: you have obliged me by help, which I have not, at present, the means of repaying; and it is not my way to turn round on those who do me a service."

"Suppose I could show you that it was the best way of requiting all obligation, and making a balance on the other side? Suppose that, by following the instructions I should give, you not only won friends among your old opponents, and gained a new career, and a probable fortune, but repaid me all my advances, and enabled me to dispense with your future services?"

"If that were possible, it would be a good day's work indeed. But it looks more like playing a double game than a winning one; and for that I am not prepared."

"Are you prepared for ruin—utter, hopeless, irretrievable?"

"No; and I would recommend no one to threaten me with it, Professor, yourself least of all. There are worse spirits to be called up by a hasty word than any with which you torture children."

Cosmo Dangerfield's face grew dark as night. His eyes gleamed with fury for a moment: though he controlled it sufficiently to make a calm reply.

"It is fit we should understand each other, Mowatt. I bear much from you on account of your skill; but if you pass the bounds of my courtesy, you must take the consequences. Dare, for an instant, to cross my plans; betray by a single word the trust I repose in you, and I shall know you are an enemy—and with enemies all is fair. What I should cover in a faithful friend, I should expose to scorn in a treacherous colleague; and I doubt whether your brother surgeon, or his venerable ally, would be ready to take your hand if they knew all it had been induced to do."

"Dangerfield, you are worse than I thought," gasped the unhappy man, shrinking back, not so much from the threat, as from the memories it invoked. "To make a man's past faults, instead of a ladder by which he may rise to better things, a rope to drag him down deeper in the mire, is a work for the author of evil himself—and if I had ever doubted his existence I must believe in it now!"

The Professor smiled as if it had been a compliment. "Remember this, my dear Mowatt: I do not allow myself to be trifled with by anyone who has once cast in his lot with me—on the other hand, no one who serves me well, and obeys me blindly, ever misses his reward. You have your choice to-day, which you will do. Either follow my instructions to the letter, and reap the good harvest which I foresee will ripen for us both; or break with me openly, and see what your forgiving and forgetting patrons in the North will do for you, when they hear what I should tell them. Choose, I say—and this instant; for I must know friend from foe."

"I have no choice; I must do your bidding, and you know it," said Mowatt, who had become very pale, but spoke with compara-

tive calmness. "I am only waiting to hear how my fortune is to be made. It has been a long time coming."

"Send out for a bottle of champagne, and I will show you."

Champagne was, as the Professor knew, Mowatt's favourite luxury, and their plans were generally matured under its influence. The fact of his proposing it was a token of his willingness to conciliate the vassal he had not hesitated to insult; a mixed treatment much resembling the policy he had followed with his deceased wife. Not till the glasses had been filled several times, did he resume the topic in the minds of both; and, this time, he spoke with the blandness of one who had only the good of his listener at heart.

"To go back to what we were saying, my dear fellow—I confess I did feel a little annoyed at such a palpable attempt to throw dust in your eyes with a few well-turned sentences. Every word was an affront in itself, and I could hardly help stepping out to send the young schoolmaster back to his Latin grammar. But since they themselves have commenced the game, it would be a great pity not to go on with it, and the sooner you quarrel with wicked Cosmo Dangerfield, the better. You are turned out of your employment—you have not a farthing to call your own—you are willing to starve, sooner than be his tool any longer; but after the generous offers made you by Mr. Frankland, you feel drawn to accept the hands held out in such cordial brotherhood—if only you can see Sir Marcus Combermere and Archdeacon Burleigh yourself; and hear from their own lips that they wish to be your friends. If the young gentleman proposes their coming up to town, you find that you are not safe there another day; Cosmo Dangerfield is on your traces, and spies out everything you do; the only plan is for you to hasten into the country as cheaply as possible, and lay the matter before them, wherever they are. Either at Grasmere, or at Comber Court, I need not point out what your next move will be; but you shall have full instructions nevertheless, Mowatt, and can report to me from time to time under some convenient private cover. The one person you must win, at all hazards, is my child's guardian, Miss Granard; it is through her only can we reach the child herself. I need not say that all idea of interfering with her custody of Emily is out of the question; the time for that is gone by. You have a serious task to perform—you have last words, wishes, warnings, to convey, and cannot acquit yourself of the duty without her assistance. If you are half as clever as I believe you to be, you will be intimate with the young lady before her friends find out what you are doing, and then the rest will be easy."

"Easy, you say—to play such a part before so many eyes, and not be found out as an impostor! And how is it that you like to trust me out of your sight? What is to prevent my doing in earnest what you are teaching me to do as a blind?"

"My dear fellow, it would be the making of us both, only I did

not like to press too much upon you at once. Whatever and wherever you are, you cannot escape *me*; and therefore it would only make our game the safer that you turned it into earnest."

"And how about your séances? Can you carry them on alone?"

"I could; but I have had enough of London heat for the present, and Paul and I are going to the seaside. And that reminds me—I am quite ready to give favourable terms for any authentic revelations; you managed so well last night that I was quite sorry when the boy stopped. Was all that story genuine?"

"I believe so."

"Can you follow it up? Have you a clue to the mystery?"

"Not quite yet; but I am on its trace, and when I am certain myself, you shall know more."

"Come, old fellow, a cheque will be worth more than a secret; name your price, and I will pay you cash down."

"Quite out of the question—you are the last person in the world to whom I would sell my knowledge. I repented of what I had done when I saw that lady's face."

"Nay, nay, you need not go so far as that; a little repentance may be useful, but too much would only hinder business; and after all—What now?" he asked, interrupting himself, as the youth in charge looked in from the shop.

"The gentleman has called again to see Mr. Cloud."

"Ask him to wait a few minutes."

The minutes seemed very long to Lewis Frankland. He was in a fever of impatience and vexation by the time he was admitted.

"I have done the most idiotic thing," he began: "left my parcel in a cab. I got into one to save time; saw a friend I had not met for years, and jumped out to stop him; never thought of the box till after I had sent away the hansom. I must give notice in Scotland Yard; only I may be asked what it contains. What am I to say? Dangerous chemicals; or what?"

Mowatt, whose face was now as much flushed as it had previously been pale, reflected a moment before he spoke.

"I had better go about it myself, Mr. Frankland. I should be very sorry if the box were damaged, and it will be a great disappointment to Miss Wilmot."

"But it will take up your time."

"My time, sir, is now all my own. Much has happened since you were here. Professor Dangerfield, of whom you have heard ——"

"The greatest rascal living!"

"Well, that is somewhat strong language, but I am not going to dispute the point. The essential fact is, that he, the Professor, overheard some of our conversation, and he considers the messages you delivered tantamount to a corruption of my fidelity—I am here as his hired servant. Our discussion on the matter has ended in my leaving his service, and I have no other to look to, and nowhere to go."

"Then you are free, and can accept my friends' offers without a scruple," said Lewis, quickly. "It is the very best thing that could have happened, next to hearing that that fellow had been horse-whipped. I am not a fighter by trade, but I never longed to administer chastisement to anyone as to him. The worst of all cruel bullying is that which tortures nervous minds and tender hearts."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Frankland; and I could wish he were your pupil for the sole purpose of the correction. We will go at once in search of this cab, if you please; and settle our plans as we walk along."

Cecilia Wilmot was on the watch; and when her messenger returned, she slipped out to meet him on the stairs. His penitence and regret for the loss gave her a shock which explanation could not soften. He had made enquiries, and promised a reward; but, as yet, had heard nothing. Cloud hoped to get it by describing the contents, and he would bring the box himself as soon as it was found.

"I cannot express how vexed I am, especially as I see I have vexed you," Lewis added, with a sincerity that could not be mistaken, and Cecilia was unable to conceal her annoyance. A telegram had come from Mr Bourne, announcing his intention to be in town that evening, and hoping the ladies would be ready to travel the next day; and the news had by no means improved her spirits. Lewis had never seen her so petulant and unreasonable; and yet she looked so pretty with her pouting and anger, and he was so convinced she had been hardly dealt with, and was suffering from wounded affection, that he pitied and forbore, and did all he could to atone for his carelessness. Mrs. Archdale lost patience at last, and told Cecilia she ought to be ashamed of being so childish—"anyone would suppose the box was of value."

Lewis fired up in her defence directly, observing that it must be expensive stuff, as the usual charge was ten guineas. The astonishment of both ladies startled him; and being called upon to explain, he had to confess he had paid Cloud two guineas, not having the rest about him. Cloud had behaved like a gentleman about it, and was satisfied with the amount; only he advised Miss Wilmot not to repeat the experiment.

Mrs. Archdale's keen eyes were on Cecilia, and she saw there was something wrong.

"Child," she said, going up to her with the imperious air she could at times assume, "I shielded you once; I deserve better treatment than to have my own weapons turned against me. Where is my mother's portrait? Is it in the missing box?"

Cecilia threw herself on the sofa, hiding her face in her hands.

"It is," she confessed. "I let him take it away. He said I should look into futurity if I did—and that much, much depended on it—your happiness, and that of—of several other people, Mrs. Archdale;

and though I don't believe in these things, I did wish to see what would come out. He promised it should be returned quite safely, and I meant to tell you afterwards ; I did indeed ! ”

Mrs. Archdale turned away from the beseeching countenance, and walked out of the room. Cecilia burst into a passion of tears, and Lewis sat silently by, looking, not at her, but on the floor. He was very sorry for her mortification—he could hardly sit in the room and hear her sob—but the thought of her untruth was terrible, overpowering all the rest. It was like the fading of the rose glow from the mountain peak ; the magic beauty gone—only the cold white of the snow left—the hard grey of the granite rock. Would any return of sunshine bring the illusion back ?

Cecilia seemed resolved to try. It needed no monitor to tell her what she had done ; and she roused her energies to the effort, sooner than lose all at one stroke.

“ I know what you are thinking of me, Mr. Frankland, though you are too kind to remind me of my fault.” And she poured out a confession of bad habits and failure of good intentions, as if she had been addressing an elder brother, whose rebuke she knew she merited, but on whose indulgence she relied. Without naming Ernest, she contrived to imply what she had been enduring from his absence, and from the news of his engagement ; and the only excuse she attempted was that which she knew her listener would himself recognise—that she had felt for the time almost reckless—hardly knowing what she did. He was willing to believe it, and hope the best ; her self-abasement, as she knew, made him all the more ready to take her part. She was not perfect, by any means ; Kate Combermere would have scorned all these little windings and twistings, that to her seemed too natural ; but when she owned her faults so touchingly, and asked advice how to conquer them, what could he do but comfort her ?

His intention had been to return to the North by the night mail ; but her urgent entreaties induced him to postpone the journey, and to promise to look in to see Mr. Bourne. And when the evening arrived, and Lewis called, according to this promise, he was shown into the dining-room, where that gentleman was sitting alone—wine and dessert before him.

“ A strange state of things, this,” Mr. Bourne observed, after pushing the wine and fruit to Lewis ; “ I thought young Archdale was a wiser fellow. But he must please himself. His mother never knew how to bring him up, and, of course, all he does is right—and now, instead of going down with us to-morrow, she talks of joining him at the Lakes. I must say, they are both cool hands ; it will be some time before I ask them again.”

Lewis made some good-humoured remark on there being a lady in the case. A dissatisfied nod was the only answer.

“ There is no knowing what you youngsters aim at. I should have

expected that you, who were the lady's rescuer, would have been the chosen swain. Perhaps you did not give her the choice."

Lewis admitted the fact, while expressing sincere admiration and regard for Miss Granard. The old gentleman seemed to be pondering something in his mind for some minutes, when he abruptly asked his guest to go down to the sea with them. His wife would be sadly disappointed at the double failure, and would make him heartily welcome; and if he had a mind to ride, he could easily get a mount. Lewis thanked him, but was doubtful; in fact, though he knew it was dangerous, he could not decide till he had looked at Cecilia; one glance would be enough. If she really wished it, he would go—at all risks, and in spite of other plans; but if she was indifferent, all the better for both. In that case, he should start for the Lakes in the morning, and take Mowatt with him.

"So Mrs. Archdale fails you after all," he observed to Miss Wilmot, while handing her a cup of tea.

"Yes," was the dejected answer, "she forgives, but she cannot forget: and I do not deserve that she should. I shall not have a single person near me whom I care to speak to, and I shall have no rides, which I have been looking forward to so long. Could not you persuade yourself, Mr. Frankland, that your duty calls you to take a little sea bathing?"

"Duty is not the question; it is entirely one of pleasure. Mr. Bourne has been pressing me to go with you."

"You don't mean it? And you will, of course? You cannot refuse Sir Marcus's old friend, if you could be hard-hearted to—to me."

The last word was dropped with an arch glance at his face, and a wistful, half-sorrowful smile, that disarmed all his resolution. And Mr. Lewis Frankland took his seat by her side, and they made their plans for an agreeable week in Kent, as if neither had a thought beyond.

Mrs. Archdale looked at them as she sat apart, a slight smile curling her lip; but she was pale, and had an anxious, troubled expression, which Mr. Bourne could not help noticing. With more kindness than he usually showed her, he observed that she had been tiring herself in nursing others, and wanted rest.

"It is a pity you cannot come down with us, but I quite understand why you are wanted elsewhere. Have you a decent pen here, Cecilia?"

She brought him her own dainty writing-case. He tumbled it over in quest of a plain sheet of paper, everything being decorated with monograms and devices innumerable. Having written a few lines, he folded them into her largest envelope. With this in his hand, he sat down by Mrs. Archdale, to talk over Ernest's prospects. He was a man who could be very tiresome in small matters, and show real kindness about great; and he seemed anxious to prove to her and himself

that what he had heard could make no difference in his goodwill. Ernest had shown a capacity for work, far exceeding his expectations, and his plan now was to give him a settled position in the business, with a liberal salary; not enough to marry upon, but sufficient to make him comfortable until he could become a partner. To do that, he must be able to throw some capital into the concern, and in time, when the old man wore out, he would be the actual and working head. "By that time, Miss Granard will be at liberty, if the poor child lives, and then they can do as pleases them, and you," concluded Mr. Bourne.

Mrs. Archdale took his hand, and pressed it in both her own. He gave hers a hearty squeeze, and left her with the letter he had just written, in her lap; walking away himself to the conservatory, where he was accustomed to indulge in a cigarette, for the benefit of the geraniums. She opened the envelope—it contained a few lines of congratulation, and a cheque for fifty pounds.

At that moment the servant entered, and announced Mr. Cloud. He had called to see Miss Wilmot.

Cecilia looked at Mrs. Archdale in dismay, for Mr. Bourne was not quite out of hearing. She understood the appeal.

"I will go and speak to Cloud, my dear. I will tell him you require no more attendance."

As she left the room, Mr. Bourne looked in from the conservatory. "Who is it, Cecilia?"

She held up her finger to Lewis, with an arch look, and tripped across the room to explain—not exactly the true facts of the case, but as many as were expedient. While Mrs. Archdale hastened to the library, where Mowatt was waiting.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DANGEROUS ALLY.

IF Mrs. Archdale could, as we have seen, be caressing and gracious on some occasions, and to some people, she could also be extremely distant—almost haughty; and it was with this last mood in the ascendant that she greeted the visitor, in whom she only recognised the dispenser specially favoured by her son. In a tone of semi-civility that savoured of command, she thanked him for his trouble on their behalf, and requested he would deliver to her the parcel which Miss Wilmot expected, if, as she hoped, he had brought it.

"Shall I not have the pleasure of seeing Miss Wilmot?" asked Mowatt, nothing abashed by his reception.

"You must excuse her this evening; she is particularly engaged. It matters the less, that I am in the secret of her chemical studies, Mr. Cloud, and can be indulgent to a girlish prank, played in perfect innocence of intention—however I may feel towards those who deliberately turned it to their own purposes."

"Meaning whom, madam, may I ask?"

"Whom should I mean, sir, but those people who borrowed my mother's likeness, in order to make a theatrical effect at a pretended revelation? I was there myself, so I was able to judge how far the occult science would presume to go; and all I can say is, I hope it is the last time that the spirits, or their mediums, will take the trouble to meddle with my family affairs."

"Without entering into an argument, Mrs. Archdale, I may just observe, that your paying a visit to the Professor was not quite consistent with your avowed disbelief; and so far from really wishing that no more trouble should be taken in the matter, the darling wish of your heart, at this moment, is to know what would have been revealed if the boy had held out five minutes longer."

"Do *you* know?" she asked, eagerly; quite thrown off her guard. He shook his head with an ironical smile.

"My offence, if I have committed one, was in mentioning to Miss Wilmot the remarkable phenomena I have myself witnessed at Dangerfield's séances; and suggesting the method by which some light might be thrown on a period of your family history, on which your son's mind has been greatly exercised of late. In the peculiar state of his brain, it was a relief to tell me his dreams and fancies, and to explain how they arose; and the facts, as far as they are known, were not difficult to impress on the mind of the boy, Paul. The process by which it is done is the secret of the philosopher you consulted. But, as you no doubt were aware, his revelations went beyond those facts; and he had begun to read a page of the past which no one else could decipher. You said that yourself."

"I did; and I own to having been startled and interested; though I ought to be ashamed of such weakness. How could he know what happened so many years ago, of which no one, as far as we can learn, has ever heard? Confess the truth, Mr. Cloud—it was a melodramatic effect, got up for a purpose—and would be repeated, with suitable alterations, before the next enquirer, public or private, who appeared likely to make it worth while."

"If it were the truth, I might confess it, certainly," was the reply. "But for all your scorn and satire, Mrs. Archdale, you know it is not your real opinion—and I can assure you it is not mine."

"It is most extraordinary!" she murmured, half to herself, half to him; "it is what I could not have believed had I not been there. Mr. Cloud, what do you think? what do you advise? Should I learn more by another visit?"

"Yes, madam. You might learn, if you chose, that it is dangerous work to insult one moment, and invoke the next. In your present state of mind, I should recommend your letting the matter alone."

"This is insolence, sir! My son would not allow it if he were here. Be so good as to give me my picture, and to tell me what we are indebted to you for your trouble."

He laid the box on the table, but stopped her as she drew out her purse.

"Your son has always treated me like a gentleman; and for his sake I would bear a good deal; but do not go too far. If you owe me anything, Mrs. Archdale, it will be for this last piece of advice—have nothing more to do with Dangerfield, either in this, or any other matter. It is the more valuable, that I know you will not follow it." He took up his hat as he spoke, made her a bow, and departed before she could resolve what to say.

Humiliated, incensed as she was, it was rather difficult to return to the drawing-room with a gentle smile on her face, letting Cecilia see what she had in her hands, and that the act was forgiven: and to take an early opportunity, with tears just kept back in her still handsome eyes, of showing Mr. Bourne how she felt his kindness. This done, however, she took her work; and while Cecilia was playing her guardian's favourite waltzes, and Lewis turning over the pages, she could muse over what she had heard, and resolve on what should next be done.

The result of these musings justified Mowatt's sarcastic farewell. Mrs. Archdale left Mr. Bourne's house early the next morning, and returned to her own lodgings. From thence she wrote a note to Professor Dangerfield, requesting the favour of a private interview.

"You were good enough to call yourself my friend on a former occasion," were the concluding words of her billet; "it will be an act of real friendship if you can relieve the anxiety under which I am at present labouring."

She sent the note by a messenger, with injunctions to obtain an answer if possible; but he brought back word that he could make nobody hear the bell, therefore contented himself with dropping the note into the box. She waited at home, growing more and more impatient every hour; and about six o'clock, when she had begun to despair, a brougham drove up to the door, and the Professor's black-edged card was followed by himself in person.

Mrs. Archdale was struck, as perhaps the Professor meant her to be, with the change in his appearance. He had contrived to assume the complexion, the bearing, the whole effect of one whose strength was wearing away under the pressure of some heavy burden. A preoccupied manner, a look in his eyes as if gazing on the unseen, a hollowness in his voice, were all palpable witnesses to the truth of the popular report—that he was, in some way or other, a haunted man.

She could think of no other epithet as he stood before her.

"You have done me the honour of appealing to my friendship," he said, when Mrs. Archdale began to apologise for troubling him, "and so few now do so, that it is irresistible, and I have broken through my rule. How can I serve you?"

"How can you ask such a question?" retorted Mrs. Archdale.

"You know how abruptly your séance ended the other night. There must be more to follow, and you best know what it is."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Archdale; it is just one of those cases in which the prejudice of the world convicts itself. If, as some would tell you, the whole were a dramatic trick, of course I could go into the next act; but there is the difficulty. The boy failed us in the middle, and the wave of inspiration passed over his head, and left him—exhausted enough, poor fellow, but no wiser as to the rest than you or I."

"And cannot the inspiration be recalled?" she asked, unconsciously accepting the expression, at which in her cooler moments she would have been shocked.

"Those things are so uncertain—so difficult—so hardly won, that I can promise nothing. You said once that you would be convinced if a certain test were satisfactorily applied; and now I call upon you to say whether it has been, or not—whether you have not already learned something which you could not learn elsewhere."

"It is quite true," she replied, agitated in spite of herself, "and therefore it is that I crave to learn more. My happiness, and that of my son—as well as that of my mother, may all be in your hands, Professor. I need not say how gratefully we should acknowledge and reward the information that would be of such value. I am too ignorant to give any opinion upon the phenomena I witnessed; if the subject could be sifted thoroughly, I am willing to do whatever is in my power, confident that you will ask me nothing unreasonable."

"Nothing unreasonable, Mrs. Archdale? Is it a case for reasons, do you suppose? Have you the smallest idea of the means by which I must satisfy you, if I do it at all?"

She was silent; for, unwilling to offend him, it was rather a difficult question to answer.

"What you heard that night," he went on, "was partly known to you already—granted. But you were startled to hear a sequel begun, which no living tongue could have related. Those secrets, hidden from us, are known to those who walk among us unseen; and, if I attempt to recover the thread of that lost vision, it must be at a tremendous cost."

His face, as he sat opposite to her, confirmed his words; she felt her blood chilling in her veins, even while she told herself that it was not true. Preferring to appear less intelligent than she really was, she drew out her purse, which Mr. Bourne's gift had so seasonably replenished.

"I have but little in my power at present, Professor; and can only offer you a small fee for immediate expenses"—she slipped a bank note into his hand—"but should our fortunes be mended through your help, I pledge myself to a liberal remuneration. Nay, sir, you must oblige me," as he made a show of refusal. "I know expenses must be incurred, and only regret I can do no more."

"You must do more, Mrs. Archdale, if you are in earnest. Your money will be useful, but money alone will not be enough. Where is your son?"

"At Grasmere, with his grandmother," she replied, not a little startled by his tone.

"When is he to be married?"

"Indeed, sir, I cannot tell you. His engagement is too recent—I have not seen him since he announced it."

"His choice is what you approve?"

"Of that you may be certain, or he would not have made it. You should be the last person to doubt the excellence of such a choice, considering the charge that she was selected to undertake."

"She? I beg your pardon—are we speaking of the same person?"

"I conclude we are. The young lady who is engaged to my son is Miss Granard. I spoke of her."

For days afterwards Mrs. Archdale was unable to forget the strange look that swept over the subtle actor's face, when that name was uttered. He did not speak for a few moments, but his eyes were fixed on hers, no longer with their haggard, dreamy expression, as if seeing invisible and fearful things; but keen, concentrated, and thoughtful, as ideas revolved themselves rapidly in his fertile brain.

"I understand," he said, presently, "your son is engaged to my poor child's guardian. If they marry, she will live with them—and, I conclude, his mother will not be far off. It is a happy prospect for Emily—I congratulate you all."

"Do not be in too great a hurry, Professor; there is no chance of such an establishment at present. My son only hopes for it as a future to be won; Miss Granard considers her duty to her ward as taking precedence of all others; and their means are not such as to warrant their marrying for some little time."

"Mrs. Archdale"—his head bent nearer to hers, and his voice dropped to a whisper—"are you prepared to follow my counsel, for your own good, and your son's? If you are, and will act according to instructions, I see—what no one else can—a way to the attainment of your wishes. What it will cost me—not in money, but in suffering, such as I could never describe—I will not think about now; it is the one chance that is given us, and I am prepared to seize it."

"Will you explain yourself more clearly? I can promise nothing beforehand," she said, but her breath came short and quick with expectation: and as he proceeded to unfold his plan, still in the guarded whisper with which he had begun, her eyes dilated, and her lips parted unconsciously. Once she was about to start from her seat, but his finger on her arm restrained the impulse, and she heard him to the end. The conference that ensued lasted about half an hour, and then the Professor took his leave.

Mr. Dangerfield had only time for a hasty dinner before giving

one of his experimental lectures to a curiously mixed audience : who came to be amused, and applauded everything. It was ten o'clock before the house was clear, and he was glad to find Justine ready with a cold collation, and iced hock-and-water—in that temperature a most grateful beverage. His lips were parched, and he took a deep draught before he even sat down. Then he signed to her to stay in the room.

“Where is Paul?”

“Gone to bed—quite knocked up with the heat, poor boy. This English climate will be the death of us all,” added Justine, dismally.

“I thought he looked as if he had had enough for the present ; I mean to give him change of air. Did he sup?”

“He tried to swallow a crust, but it would not do. He has worked too hard, monsieur ; and to-night he had to do double duty.”

“Yes, the doctor's place is not easy to fill up : but we are safer without a false friend, Justine. He never trusted you, you know.”

“Nor you either, monsieur ; and Mowatt may have had his reasons. For my part, I owe him no ill-will. He did me injustice, and I have forgiven him : that is all.”

“A most virtuous and excellent action on your part, my good woman,” remarked the Professor. “Now get me a tray and another plate, for I mean that boy to have a mouthful of this ham and chicken, and a glass of hock. He will sleep all the better for it. No, do not trouble yourself, I am going to see him eat it. He will obey me, when I say it must be done.”

Justine stared, but kept her thoughts to herself, and only took the precaution of creeping up stairs after her master, and listening at the keyhole of Paul's door ; a means of acquiring information which was somewhat crippled by her imperfect knowledge of the English tongue, and which only her fears for the boy's safety would have tempted her to employ. There was, however, no cause for uneasiness in the Professor's behaviour ; he entered the room quietly, and when Paul, whose sleep appeared uneasy, turned his hot head towards the light and opened his eyes, he sat down by the bed, taking in his own strong hand the slight one hanging over the blanket.

“You are not sleeping comfortably, my lad. Wake up, and let me see if I cannot set matters straight.”

Paul obeyed, and sat up in his bed, hiding the light from his dazzled eyes, and expecting to be ordered to dress and get to work. But the tones of his master's voice were friendly and considerate, and when he found a tray of tempting refreshments before him, and was invited in hospitable terms to fall to, he soon discovered that he was both hungry and thirsty, and emptied cup and platter to their mutual satisfaction.

“Very kind of you, sir, to take so much trouble,” he said, as the Professor, with a good-humoured nod, removed the tray.

“Well, I should not take it for everybody ; nor for you, if I did

not see you deserve it. Justine told me you had had no supper, and I thought you looked done-up. I have been making a plan to give you a holiday and change of air. Would you like to hear about it now?—or will you go to sleep, and wait till to-morrow?"

"Oh, I couldn't sleep again yet awhile, sir," was Paul's uneasy answer. "Am I to go across the water again?"

"Not if I can help it. I want you to go down into the North—among your old friends."

"What to do, sir, please?" And there was a touch of distrust in his voice, for which his master was quite prepared.

"No harm to anyone, my boy. You must understand that the law has given the charge of Miss Emily to Miss Granard, and, therefore, anyone attempting to divide them would be liable to punishment. It is to do your other master, Mr. Archdale, a service, that I want you to go."

"Please, sir, I would be glad enough: only I can't answer for myself if he talks to me."

"He shall not try you in that way, Paul; I can send you among them all, without one of them knowing who you are. You can play a part well enough without me at your elbow to prompt you?"

"Yes, I think I can," said Paul, who thought this sounded more promising.

"When you played so well the other night, that I was almost taken in myself, did not you want to go on and finish the scene? I did, for there must have been a good deal to follow, that would have interested more than you and me."

"The doctor knows more than we do, that is certain," said Paul.

"He does; and he means to turn it to his own advantage. Now I am pretty nearly sure that on his secret hangs the making of Mr. Archdale's fortune, and that secret you must get hold of. The doctor is playing on both sides—and I distrust him; and those whom I distrust I very soon clear out of my way. He is gone down to Grasmere, under the semblance of an interesting penitent, meaning to get what he can out of the liberality, or the weakness, whichever it may be, of Sir Marcus Combermere and the old Archdeacon. You must follow him, keep an eye on all he does, and, in some way or other, get hold of any papers he may have with him. I suspect he keeps some locked up in that travelling-pouch of his, and that they are papers he has no right to."

"He has been attending Mr. Archdale," said Paul, musing. "Perhaps he has told him all about it, and that is why he wants to go to Grasmere after him."

"Scarcely, my boy. On the contrary, Mowatt has gathered from young Archdale all the particulars he wanted, and now he means to throw him over—instead of doing him justice."

"If I thought that, sir——"

"I am sure of it, Paul; I took care to sound him on the matter

myself. I do think it hard that a young man should be grinding at a desk when he ought to have money of his own—though I suppose his grandmother would inherit first. They little guessed, that night when you were in her house, that you might be the lucky star that was to make them rich."

"I should like to do that well enough," said Paul, with a nod; and with that his master was satisfied. He patted his shoulder, bade him lie down and sleep while he could, and said he should call him at five, that he might be ready for the mail train.

"There will be a little dressing-up necessary first, so we must give ourselves plenty of time," he observed: and, as he moved to leave the room, the faithful Justine fled from the keyhole.

Justine had heard and understood only a part of the conversation, but her anxiety was so far relieved, that she saw her master had work in hand for Paul to do, and, therefore, meant him no harm. All that night she was kept busily employed in assisting at the needful preparations, of which it is not necessary to give an account. Suffice it to say, that when Professor Dangerfield started the next morning for the King's Cross Station, it was to take a ticket, and arrange the departure of a red-headed lad, in the dress of a helper, who was joined by two dark-complexioned gentlemen, in charge of a horse. It was rumoured among the porters that the latter was of some notoriety, and that it was on its way to a highly aristocratic stable. A little difficulty had been experienced in getting it into the van, but the red-headed boy had quieted the animal in a moment, and chose to remain with him in the van.

The whole party, horse included, went by the train to Windermere, and thence proceeded to Ambleside, where they took up their quarters, awaiting, as they gave out to anybody whom it might concern, the arrival of the stud-groom, who was to close the bargain for the great man. Meanwhile, as the horse must be exercised, the lad had to ride him, and his first airing was to Grasmere.

Now Grasmere, with all its attractions—and they are many—cannot exactly be termed so lively a place, that an incident, or a novelty, is not generally acceptable. Before Paul and his steed had halted many minutes at the first hotel he reached, where he called for a glass of beer, several intelligent persons had gathered round to look at the horse, and speculate on his merits—ask his price, and what he was expected to do. One of these was Miss Granard's servant, Charles; who, it must be confessed, sometimes found his time hang a little on his hands, and did not object to a friendly chat now and then, especially about horses. Paul held his breath at first, as his old acquaintance came up, but when he saw he was not recognized, rather enjoyed the disguise, true-born actor that he was. His story was pat and plausible. The horse belonged to the great dealer, Mr. Lazarus; and two of his men were at Ambleside, waiting to complete the sale to a nobleman; his own part was the riding of the horse, as

neither of them could hold him. And he told some exaggerated stories of the animal's fiery temper, in a lazy, drawling voice, that amused his audience mightily. In the midst of the laughter thus excited, another voice, from an unexpected quarter, suddenly exclaimed, "Why, that is Cairngorm!"

Paul turned, and touched his cap, speaking more lazily than before. "That's about what it is, sir: proud to find some one as knows us."

"I have a good right to know the horse and remember him, my lad, for he and I came to grief together," said Mr. Archdale. "Ah! they have patched you up, Cairngorm, as they have me; but neither of us can pretend to be ever quite sound again."

"Beg your honour's pardon," drawled the Professor's emissary, "but be you belonging to his lordship as wants the horse?"

"I belong only to myself, my boy," said Ernest, good-humouredly.

"And maybe your honour wouldn't care to have yourself cried down just when you wanted to strike a bargain?"

"You are welcome to cry me down, so long as you only say what is true. I believe neither Cairngorm nor I had fair play—had we, poor fellow?" he added, stroking the horse's neck, while his heart swelled within him at the recollections it called up. How long ago it seemed—how completely life had changed for him since that terrible day! how utterly impossible it would be to recall the state, either of mind or body, in which he had last sprung into Cairngorm's saddle!

"I wonder if he would know me again—I was the only one then who could do anything with him," he observed, presently; convinced that the red-headed groom was eyeing him somewhat sarcastically, as if dubious of his powers. Paul, with a patronizing air of amusement at the gentleman's fancy, threw one leg over the saddle, and let himself leisurely down.

"If your honour likes to change places with me, I've no objection. I daresay I could fill your seat as neatly as you will mine."

But with all his assumed impertinence, he kept a heedful eye and hand on Cairngorm's rein, even after the young man had mounted. A precaution justified by the event, for the animal no sooner felt the additional weight than his eye began to kindle and his nostrils to expand, while the pawing of his hoof warned those crowding round to give him a wider berth.

"Let go, my lad!" said Ernest, quickly, for he knew what was coming; and, as Paul hesitated to obey, struck him smartly on the wrist, just in time. Cairngorm made a bound, spun round on his hind legs, and then bolted in the direction of a fence, over which he flew, landing on soft turf, the touch of which only added to his excitement. But the hand on the bridle had recovered much of its cunning, and there was something in the sensation of being once again in the saddle that was new life to the rider, making him reckless of all possible consequences. Round the paddock they went at racing speed, but Cairngorm had succumbed before half the gallop

was over, and yielded to hand and rein as if he had been trained for a lady's use. A chorus of applause, tempered with respect, greeted their return to the starting-point; and not till Ernest had alighted was it perceived how his cheek, flushed one moment, had grown pale the next.

He gave Paul half-a-crown, and was turning away, when a hand was laid on his arm, and a voice of authority spoke. "You had better come in here, Mr. Archdale, and rest for a moment."

He looked round in surprise, and with a sigh of relief.

"You here, Cloud? When did you come?"

"Never mind when or why. You have done a very foolish thing, and I am here at hand. I know you are in pain."

"I am, but never mind—don't tell anybody. Charles," as that retainer, with a long face, pressed to his side, "take care nothing is said about this till I tell it myself, do you hear?"

It was as much as Charles could do to hear, for the voice of the speaker was failing, and Mowatt had only just time to put some brandy to his lips to save him from a dead faint.

And in the confusion that followed, no one observed how quietly the young groom had remounted and ridden away.

(To be continued.)



AT NIGHT.

(Translated from "Juste Ollivier.")

At night, when work is done, 'mid shadows grey that darken
And cling about the window, where once the sun was bright,
Sweet sounds come back again to which we used to hearken,
At night !

At night, tho' we are old, and the grey shadows clinging
Presage to us that shore where there is no more light:
Sometimes there come again sweet airs of childhood's singing,
At night !

At night we two may sit in shadow, open-hearted :
Long since the time is past when Hope was all in sight !
Softly we sing the songs of happy days departed,
At night !

At night the cricket's voice sounds through the shadows dreary ;
Our songs, alas ! like his, have neither charm nor weight ;
We only rest and sing, hushed hopes and voices weary,
At night !

MRS. HEMANS.

THERE are few poets whose minds have been so truly reflected in their works as was that of Felicia Hemans. A noble and devoted mother, whose whole life was dedicated to her children, she is essentially the poetess of youth; her simple lyrics are usually our first introductions to the world of poetry; and, learned as they are at a mother's knee, as she herself probably first recited them to her own boys, they are among our earliest recollections. Although she never soars to those heights upon which genius is enthroned, a vein of pure yet romantic sentiment, an intense love of nature in its grandest and most beautiful forms, a deep religious feeling, bright, cheerful, and hopeful, are the characteristics of all she wrote. Her works are familiar in most English households, and some knowledge of the gentle woman who penned them may impart an additional charm to their perusal.

She was the daughter of a merchant named Browne, and was born in Duke Street, Liverpool, September 25th, 1794. Her father was an Irishman; her mother was descended from a distinguished Venetian family, three of the members of which had risen to the dignity of the Dogeship. Felicia Dorothea was the fifth of seven children. Almost from the cradle she was remarkable for her beauty, her precocious talents, and that exquisite sensitiveness to the visionary and fantastic which indicates the poetic temperament. Before she was seven years of age commercial reverses obliged her parents to quit Liverpool and retire to North Wales, where they took up their abode in a spacious old mansion, called Gwrych, near Abergele.

It was a solitary, romantic spot, close to the sea shore, and shut in by a chain of mountains. Here Felicia imbibed that enthusiastic love for nature which became a passion; here she passed the happiest hours of her life, and to the "green land of Wales" her heart turned as yearningly as ever did that of a Scotchman to his hills or a Swiss to his mountains.

At seven years old, an age when most girls' ideas are limited to dolls, romps, and new frocks, Felicia's delight, in the bright summers' days, was to climb up into an old apple-tree with a volume of Shakespeare in her hand, and lose herself in a world of imagination, among the Rosalinds, Imogens, and Beatrices. All that was strange, weird, and romantic had an irresistible fascination for her. Gwrych, as every respectable old mansion should, had its spectre, and on moonlight nights the child, all trembling yet eager, would creep out into the long, dark avenue, fearing, yet hoping, to

get a sight of the goblin. At other times, when she was supposed to be in bed, she would rise, dress herself, and steal out of the house down to the sea shore to listen to the moaning of the waves, and to indulge in a twilight bath. She was never sent to school; her education was purely desultory; all the world of poetry was thrown open to her; but from systematic studies, beyond French, English grammar, and the rudiments of Latin, she was wholly exempted. At seven she began to compose verses, and at fourteen a volume of these was published.

It was the time of the Peninsular war, and to a mind such as hers, filled as it was with Spanish romance, the gallant struggle of an oppressed people against a usurping tyrant was a spectacle to arouse the most ardent enthusiasm. She embodied her feelings in a long poem entitled "England and Spain," which was afterwards translated into the Spanish language. Happy had it been for her if this had been the only outcome of her enthusiasm; but soon afterwards she made the acquaintance of Captain Hemans, then in the 4th, or King's Own Regiment. To her all soldiers were heroes, and all "the pride, pomp, circumstance of glorious war" so peculiarly fascinating, that she could not read the martial odes of Campbell without crimson cheeks and flashing eyes. She was just fifteen, and beautiful as a fairy, with a complexion of extraordinary brilliancy, and showers of golden ringlets shading a countenance which answered to every sensitive emotion of her mind. Captain Hemans was immediately attracted to this "phantom of delight," and the impressionable girl, thinking she had found the hero of her dreams, fell deeply in love with him. Soon, however, he was called upon to embark for Spain, and it was hoped by her family that this affection might prove only transitory. But the very circumstance of his going to fight upon the side of her favourite nation still further deepened the impression he had made, and the fervour of which a three years' absence could not weaken.

In 1809 the family removed from Gwrych to Bronwylfa, near St. Asaph. In 1811 Captain Hemans returned to Wales, and the connection was renewed with such ardour upon both sides that her friends, although they felt all those apprehensions which were thereafter to be too fully realised, finding that her happiness depended upon the union, no longer refused their consent. So Felicia and her hero were married in the following year, and took up their abode at Daventry, the Captain having been appointed Adjutant to the Northamptonshire Local Militia. At the end of a year, however, the corps was dissolved, and they, to her great joy—for during all those months she had been pining for her mountain home—had to return to Bronwylfa.

Just before the birth of her fifth child the state of Captain Hemans' health, which had been much shattered during the recent campaign, obliged him to try the climate of Italy. His wife did not

accompany him—on account of the children it was said; but there was a graver reason for her remaining beneath her mother's roof. Suffice it to say that there had been a dreary awakening from that dream of heroic love, of a perfect union of souls, and of the realisation of an idealism which her girlish fancy had conjured up. There was no formal separation; they corresponded, but they never met again. Henceforth there was a shadow upon her life; but it brought with it no bitterness, no misanthropy, for she made the best of those sources of happiness which yet remained to her: religion, books, her children, and the exercise of her talents.

Nothing could damp her eagerness for learning. She acquired an excellent knowledge of French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and German, and some acquaintance even with Latin. Her sister describes her mode of study as having been singularly desultory. She would be surrounded by books in half a dozen languages, and on all kinds of topics, and turn from one to another like a bee flying from flower to flower. Yet there was no confusion in her mind, and all the stores of her knowledge were distinctly arranged, ready to be called forth whenever they might be wanted. Her powers of memory were very extraordinary; she is said to have learned Heber's "Europe," a poem of four hundred and twenty lines, by heart in one hour and twenty minutes, although she had never even read it before. Yet she left behind her as many manuscript volumes of extracts from the books she had read as would form a small library. Her first volume of poems, entitled "Tales and Historic Scenes," in which she embodied much of the fruits of her varied reading, was published in 1819; then followed "The Sceptic," a religious poem; "Modern Greece," and a couple of prize poems, one of which, upon the subject of the meeting between Wallace and Bruce on the banks of the Carron, appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

But in 1821 she set to work upon a more ambitious task, the composition of a tragedy. It was Reginald Heber, then vicar of a Welsh parish, with whom she had recently formed a friendship that ended only with her life, who persuaded her to try its fortune upon the stage. Through him Milman interested himself to introduce it at Covent Garden, where it was accepted, and Charles Kemble and Young undertook the principal parts. It was produced in December, 1823. But "The Vespers of Palermo," as might be anticipated, depended rather upon a series of poetical passages than upon dramatic action and passion, and was quite unsuited to the stage. Mrs. Hemans and her admirers laid the failure to the account of Miss Fanny Kelly, who performed the heroine, a part decidedly unsuited to that excellent actress's powers; and in confirmation of this view, they cite its after success at Edinburgh, when Mrs. Henry Siddons sustained the rôle. At Covent Garden, notwithstanding the splendid acting of the two tragedians, it was played but one night; Murray, however, gave her two hundred pounds for the copyright.

In 1825 she, her mother, sister, and four of her boys, the other being at school, removed from Bronwylfa to Rhyllon. The two houses, however, were only a quarter of a mile apart; each was situated on an eminence of either side the river Clwyd, and the respective inhabitants could communicate with each other by means of telegraphic signals. Not nearly so pleasant and picturesque was the new abode as the old. Bronwylfa was embowered in roses and shrubs and creepers; Rhyllon was a tall, staring brick house, quite destitute of foliage. Readers of her poems will perhaps remember the "Dramatic Scene between Bronwylfa and Rhyllon," in which she has pleasantly contrasted the two buildings. But the new house was roomy and convenient, there was a charming view from the windows, and honeysuckles and roses were soon planted to trail over the staring brick. At the bottom of a green slope there was a pretty woodland dell, which became her favourite haunt on fine days. Here, seated on a grassy mound, beneath a shady beech, her boys playing about her, and surrounded by books, reading or dreaming, she passed the happiest days she had known since her marriage. Very charmingly has she described the spot in the "Hour of Romance":—

"There were thick leaves above me and around,
And low sweet sighs, like those of childhood's sleep,
Amidst their dimness, and a fitful sound
As of soft showers on water. Dark and deep
Lay the oak shadows o'er the turf, so still,
They seem'd but pictured glooms; a hidden rill
Made music, such as haunts us in a dream,
Under the fern tufts; and a tender gleam
Of soft green light, as by the glowworm shed,
Came pouring through the woven beech boughs down."

Every hour of her day was apportioned out; the early morning was devoted to the instruction of her boys, then she sat down to her desk to compose, or answer her ever-increasing correspondence, after which, with all the eagerness of a schoolgirl just relieved from her tasks, she would be away into the fields plucking the cowslips, which she loved as Chaucer did the daisies, or joining the boys in their romps and sports. In the winter evenings she was equally among their indoor amusements.

"However wearied or harassed," to quote her sister, "she might be, the claims of this joyous season (Christmas) were never remitted. The fate of poetic heroes and heroines would remain in abeyance whilst juvenile mimes and mysteries were going on at the fireside, and, for the moment, nothing seemed so important as the invention of different devices for the painted bags of bon-bons destined to adorn the Christmas-tree. Even in the midst of all her dramatic vexations she could write, *con amore*, 'The boys were very happy

yesterday evening with a plain twelfth-cake of their own, when, just as it had been despatched, and the little ones were gone to bed, there arrived a much more splendid one from the Bishop; so we are to have a *thirteenth* night this evening. Charlie lays claim to what he calls the "coronation" from the top of the above-named cake, as he says he "always has the coronations from the top of the Bishop's cakes." " "

This is a charming picture of a happy household. Her children were associated with her in every pursuit and every pleasure; to them of an evening she would read the verses she had composed during the day, and theirs was always the first tribute of applause or tears she received.

Although subject to fits of intense depression, and never wholly out of the shadow of a disappointed life, she was usually cheerful, sometimes even capable of extravagances, as when once, while out with a pleasure party, in a freak she set on fire one side of a furze-covered Welsh hill. While in these high spirits, she would frequently compose verses full of whimsicalities upon some person or event; these she called her "wildnesses;" few were ever published. But, although humorous, they were never satirical. She loved music passionately, as it exists in old national airs; she had a pleasing voice, and sang very well when she was young; the harp, naturally, from her love of Wales, was her favourite instrument, and she had a wonderful power over it. A friend describes her playing for half an hour without notes, pouring forth a torrent of wild melody, until she exclaimed, "Really, Felicia, it seems to me that there is something not quite canny in this; so, especially as it is beginning to be twilight, I shall think it prudent to take my departure." Of a nature at once lofty and simple, governed by her affections, in which lay alike her strength and her weakness, guileless, gentle, uncomplaining, self-sacrificing—such is the character drawn by those who knew her best—she created among her immediate friends a love that can only be described as enthusiastic.

In 1827 she experienced almost the greatest affliction that could have befallen her, in the death of her beloved mother, and truest and best friend. It was a blow from which she never recovered—it swept away so much of that home feeling which was the joy of her life. Her health, too, which had been delicate for years, now gave way, and, as a climax to her misfortunes, altered circumstances, brought about by the death of her sole surviving parent, obliged her to quit her beloved Wales.

Having been on a visit to some attached friends at Wavertree Lodge, near Liverpool, she was persuaded to settle in their neighbourhood, and she accordingly fixed upon a house in the village. Her parting from "the land of her childhood, her home, and her grave," was intensely sad. So beloved was she by the peasantry around, that many of them rushed forward to touch the posts of the

gate through which she had passed; and when, three years afterwards, she paid a visit to St. Asaph, they came, with tears in their eyes, to entreat her to return and make her home among them again. "Oh, that Tuesday morning!" she wrote to a friend. "I literally covered my face all the way from Bronwylfa, until the boys told me we had passed the Clwyd range of hills. Then something of the bitterness was over."

By this time her works had made her famous wherever the English language was spoken, and at Wavertree she was sought out, personally and by letter, by people from every part of England and America; her doors were besieged by visitors, the greater part of them those portentous bores who are the torments of the lives of celebrities; some came only to have a stare at a poetess, others to ask her opinions upon every conceivable topic. One visitor would request her to read aloud, that she "might carry away an impression of the sweetness of her tones;" another, hearing some clever remark fall from her lips, clapped her hands as though she had been at a play, and exclaimed, "O *do*, Mrs. Hemans, say that again, that I may put it down and remember." When, however, these people discovered that she cared nothing for balls or parties, cards or scandal, that she was not prepared to pronounce ready-made opinions upon every subject, and that she refused to be lionised, many of the most objectionable deserted her, and fell to criticising the unConventionality of her dress, her littered apartments, &c.

It was a sad change, from Bronwylfa and Rhyllon to a very small house, one of a row close to a dusty road, from which it was separated only by a little court; her two parlours, one with a tiny book-room opening from it, were not much larger than closets; but books, flowers, her harp, and a bevy of friends, including Mary Howitt, Miss Jewsbury, Dr. Bowring, the Chorleys, and many others who frequently gathered about her hearth, relieved it of much of its prosaic dulness. In December, 1828, she wrote to Mary Howitt: "My health and spirits are decidedly improving, and I am reconciling myself to many things in my changed situation, which at first pressed upon my heart with all the weight of a Switzer's home-sickness. Among these is *the want of hills*. O this waveless horizon! how it wearies the eye accustomed to the sweeping outline of mountain scenery! I would wish that there were at least woodlands, like those so delightfully pictured in your husband's 'Chapter on Woods,' to supply their place; but it is a dull, *uninventive* nature all around here, though there must be somewhere little fairy nooks, which I hope by degrees to discover."

In the following year she paid a visit to Abbotsford, of which and of its noble master she ever after spoke in the most enthusiastic terms. "I shall not forget," she says in one of her letters, "the kindness of Sir Walter's farewell—so frank and simple and heartfelt, as he said to me, 'There are some whom we meet, and should like ever after to claim as kith and kin; and *you* are one of those.'" At Edinburgh

her society was eagerly sought in the best circles, and she became quite the lion of the Scottish capital. Her visit to Abbotsford was soon followed by one to Rydal Mount. Wordsworth had always been her favourite poet, and personal communication greatly increased the impression; he gave her a great deal of his society, read to her—his own poems, of course—walked with her, led her pony when she rode; in short, being one of his worshippers, he accepted her adoration in a very agreeable fashion. During the last four years of her life such was her admiration of his writings that she never suffered a day to elapse without reading something of them.

Wavertree did not agree with her health, and she was likewise disappointed in the advantages she had hoped from the situation in respect to her sons' education, so she soon began to contemplate another move. A visit to Dublin having given her a very favourable impression of that city, and her brother, Major Browne, being settled in Ireland, she resolved to take up her abode there. At the end of April, 1831, she quitted England, never to look upon its shores again. Her health continued to grow weaker and weaker, until the act of stooping, in consequence of a flow of blood to her head, became so painful that she could write only with pencil in a reclining position. "In my literary pursuits," she says, "I fear I shall be obliged to look out for a regular amanuensis. I sometimes retain a piece of poetry several weeks in my memory, from actual dread of writing it down."

On her way to Wicklow, for change of air, she and her maid stopped at a little inn in which there was scarlet fever. Both took the infection. From this she recovered, but it left an ague behind, and a dropsical affection which ultimately caused her death. The sad event took place on May 12, 1835. She was buried in St. Anne's Church, Dublin, which is almost close to the house in which she died.

A little before her death she composed her finest lyric, "Despondency and Aspiration," published among her posthumous works. In so brief a sketch, preferring as I have to picture the woman rather than the poetess, there has not been sufficient space to give much account of her works. In a letter written during the last year of her life she expresses regret that the constant necessity of providing money for the education of her boys had obliged her to waste her powers in mere desultory effusions. "My wish was ever to concentrate all my mental energy in the production of some more noble and complete work; something of pure and holy excellence, which might permanently take its place as the work of a British poetess. I have always, hitherto, written as if in the breathing time of storms and billows. Perhaps it may not even yet be too late to accomplish what I wish."

Alas! these aspirations were doomed never to be realised.

H. BARTON BAKER.

UNA AND THE LION.

No matter when it may have been,
 Or years ago, or but yestre'en,
 When life was in its golden spring,
 Or when its leaves were withering,
 There lived a man—I knew him then—
 No matter where, no matter when.

He was as fair, and frank, and free
 As any human soul could be.
 For every wrong he made amends ;
 Forgave all foes, improved all friends,
 And loved all women 'neath the sun,
 Yet never gave his heart to one.

Thus had he grown to manhood's prime ;
 And then he met, one fair spring time,
 When snowdrops grew a hundred deep,
 And violets just began to peep,
 As sweet a little maid as you
 Or I, or anyone e'er knew.

(Oh, if I could but paint instead !)
 Her lips were roses cherry red ;
 Her peerless brow was lily white ;
 Her eyelids were the edge of night ;
 Her eyes were moonlight, and their beam
 Filled you with love's enchanted dream.

He did not fall in love like men,
 Who first fall in, then out again ;
 He grew to love her day by day—
 Daily she stole some heart away,
 And when he'd lost quite half his heart
 He offered her the other part.

He said, " I thought, some time ago,
 My strength could match with any foe,
 But thou hast caught me in a net
 From which I cannot free me yet."
 (Indeed, it seemed he did prefer
 Being caught, for he went nearer her.)

" Nay, hear me, ere thou speak again :
 A silken cord shall join us twain ;
 Around my life one end shall be,
 The other shall be held by thee.
 Here, at thy feet, I vanquished lie,
 Fair Una thou, though Lion, I."

And somehow—how, they never knew—
 Four lips were in the place of two,
 And loving arms (the silken cords)
 Were far more eloquent than words.
 There let us leave them—happy then,
 No matter where, no matter when.

CLARISSA'S CHOICE.

IT is growing dusk. The fire in the library, although the time is early June, is burning briskly. A greyhound, a very handsome specimen of its kind, lies sleeping on the hearthrug. There is a general air of comfort in all the surroundings, yet Mr. Dugdale—whose admiration for the country is not unrestrained, and who has come down to his neglected estate only because a long-forgotten sense of duty and a new steward have called him—is sitting with his hands before him, wondering, in a melancholy fashion, what on earth he is going to do with himself for the next month.

If, he soliloquizes, he even knew anyone in the county! Of course they will all call, the Katlins especially, but new acquaintances are such a bore. And dinners where French cooks are unknown—pah! He doesn't know a tenant on his estate, or a landlord in the district, except old Major Hyde, who, probably, would be considered unendurable in town. He wonders, vaguely, what Thistleton is doing now, and Dunmore, and all that lot; perhaps——

"A lady wishes to see you, sir," says Hickson, speaking in a respectful undertone from the doorway.

"I sincerely hope *not*, Hickson," responds his master, lazily, without turning his head. "I really couldn't, you know. I have come down here, against my will, partly to escape all that kind of thing. And having sacrificed myself, I insist on quiet."

"She says, sir ——"

"I know all about it," with an impatient gesture; "just say I am ill, dying, dead, *buried*—anything, only send her away."

"I beg your pardon, sir," with an apologetic cough, "but she seemed so urgent; and I could not possibly take it upon myself to dismiss the lady in question. I believe you would not wish it, sir, if ——"

"You have evidently made up your mind I shall receive her," resignedly; "there is, therefore, nothing for it but to submit: I am incapable of argument under my present depressing circumstances. Is she," desperately, "a woman or a lady, Hickson?"

"A lady, sir; *quite* the lady."

"Ah!—old or young?"

"Not old, sir; and not *too* young either."

"Neither old nor young. That generally means forty. *Is* she forty?"

"Dear me, no, sir—nothing of the kind. I beg pardon, sir, I merely meant to imply she was a good deal more than eighteen."

"You are invaluable, Hickson; I have always said it," with a flash of admiration. "Show her in."

"Another of the personal begging-letter sort," says Mr. Dugdale to himself, with a meek shrug, unlocking a drawer that contains money. "Better have it ready; the only thing I know of to get rid of them in a hurry." Sinking back in his chair, he puts on his most miserable air, and prepares for an ignominious defeat.

There is some slight delay; then the faint rustle of a woman's skirts, a word or two from the admirable Hickson, who then throws wide the door, and announces "Miss Carew," in his usual well-bred monotone.

Dugdale, rising from his seat with some precipitancy, makes her a deferential bow. There is extreme respect, though a good deal of irrepressible surprise, in his manner as his eyes meet hers.

She is young—about three-and-twenty—very slender, very excellently formed, of middle height, and extremely pretty. Her eyes are a clear, dark grey; her light brown hair is covered by a large hat, trimmed handsomely with feathers; a grey gown fits her rounded figure to perfection; her hands are encased in irreproachable gloves. Dugdale, as he looks at her, repents him of the "begging letter" idea, and, at the bare remembrance of it, colours slightly. So does his visitor, though from far different motives.

"I must ask you to pardon this—this intrusion," she says, in a low tone, though perfectly distinct, and full of dignity and sweetness. "I would not have come myself, but my brother is quite an invalid, suffering from an accident, and it was necessary one of us should see you. When we heard you were returning to town again so soon, it frightened us into action."

"I do not return to London for a month."

"Indeed!" with suppressed chagrin. "We were told you intended leaving to-morrow, or next day. Had I known the truth ——"

"Pray sit down," says Dugdale, courteously handing her a chair, "and let me know what I can do for you."

"I should have introduced myself," she says, with a faint smile. "My brother and I are your tenants, Mr. Dugdale, and have, I think, some slight claim on your forbearance. The place—Weston Lodge; you know it?—has been in the possession of our family for years. First, my grandfather had it from *your* grandfather; then my father had it; now my brother has it; but our lease has expired." She pauses.

"You make me feel ashamed that I know so little of my tenants, or their wishes or concerns," he says. "I know, indeed, nothing of the neighbourhood. My living so much abroad is my only excuse. But that my late steward, poor fellow, died, and that the new man insisted on my presence here for a few weeks, I should not be in this house now. Yes, you want a new lease—is that it?"

"That *is* it," with a glance of surprise at his evident indifference to, or ignorance of, all that has been going on of late. "The question is, shall we get it? The new man you speak of—Graham—has,

I think, advised you to the contrary. He wishes to take our farm, and incorporate it with the fields that lie beyond it, and let it all out at a higher value. Of course we can retain the house, but without the land it is useless to us, as my brother is fond of farming. We are willing you should raise our rent—we would gladly take all those fields I speak of, that stretch to the south of us, but, unfortunately, just now we cannot. I thought, if I were to ask you, you would perhaps reconsider your steward's advice, and let us keep our *home*."

The sweet voice trembles ever such a little, the grey eyes fall, the little delicately-gloved hand taps nervously upon the table near her.

"Have you spoken to Graham?" asks Dugdale, who, just at this moment, could have soundly rated his own zealous manager.

"No. We thought it better to see you, yourself. Will you think of it?" She raises her eyes again, and regards him earnestly, entreatingly.

"To me it would not so much matter," she adds, gently, "but my brother—his heart is in the place; he has been delicate of late, and all this anxiety preys upon him, and retards his recovery. We have been good tenants; I would ask you not to dispossess us."

"I shall speak to Graham to-morrow. Pray do not disturb yourself about it; I promise you," says Mr. Dugdale, who is singularly pliable where beauty pleads, "you shall keep your home. Nobody shall dispossess you."

"How shall I thank you!" exclaims she with grateful warmth, rising. Tears of emotion shine in her dark eyes. "I hardly dared hope when I came, and now"—she pauses, and again a smile curves her lips—"I can go back to George and make him happy."

"It makes yourself happy too, I trust?"

A little shadow falls into Miss Carew's eyes. They droop.

"Thank you—yes," she answers, but there is a faint weariness, a curious pain, discernible in her tone.

She bows slightly, and turns to the door.

"Let me see you to your"—carriage he is going to say, but hesitates. She certainly looks like a woman who should have carriages at her disposal, but he remembers hearing from Graham that Weston is but a small place, and checks himself.

"Yes—I drove over," she says, quietly. And then he follows her to the hall-door steps, and sees there waiting for her a tiny phaeton, a tiny pony, and a groom holding its head. All is well appointed, and though small, perfect.

Miss Carew gives her hand to Dugdale, and steps into the phaeton; the groom springs in behind, and hands his mistress the reins; she turns, and bestows upon her landlord a smile, short, though exceedingly sweet, and in another minute, pony, tiger, lady and all have disappeared down the avenue.

He, left standing upon the gravel, watches her retreat, until distance has indeed swallowed up all traces of her, and as he looks he muses.

What a sad little face she had, but how expressive! what sweetness

in the eyes ! Yes, beyond doubt it all lay in her eyes ; there wasn't much to speak of in the rest of her features, except her mouth, which was charming—but there was certainly a fascination in her eyes. What did Graham mean by creating such confusion, all about a paltry few pounds a year, more or less ? It was most officious of him. After all, a fellow ought to come down and see about his tenants every now and then, and consult their wishes, and see after their——

“Well, Dugdale, my boy, and how are you ?” says a mellow voice behind him, and turning, he beholds *the* Major.

“Ah, Hyde, I'm uncommonly glad to see you,” exclaims he, brightening, and telling the honest truth. Even Hyde, old-fashioned as he is, brings a welcome with him, being, as it were, a breath from the world of town.

“Thank you. Heard of your arrival, and just dropped down to get a look at you, and ask you to dine to-morrow night. Know how slow you must find it vegetating in the wilderness. I came through the park, and just saw Miss Carew driving away. Monstrous pretty girl I take it. Came about the lease, eh ? You must give her her own way there, Dugdale, you must indeed, you know,” says the kindly Major.

“I have given it,” says Dugdale.

“Glad of it—glad of it. The only right thing to do. I might have known she would get no refusal from you. Beauty in distress, my boy, is all powerful, eh ? You have nothing that can touch on her this season, come now,” says the ancient hero, with an airy laugh that still retains all the freshness of nineteen. “I lay you anything you like you haven't seen a prettier girl this year.”

“Yes I have,” laughing, “but few so—so—*haunting*. I like grey eyes. Come in and dine with me, Hyde ; it will be a charity, and may perhaps save me from suicide ; I can't stand my own company.”

“I shall be delighted,” says the Major, who, next to having some one to dine with him, likes best to dine with some one. He is fond of society, and young men, and is especially fond of Dugdale.

As they lounge through the gardens enjoying a cigar before dinner, the Major grows communicative, and relates many things. Touching on the Carews, he finds himself encouraged by his host, and forthwith enlarges on the topic.

“There is only she and George,” says he, “and they are quite devoted ; *she* thinks there is nobody like George, and *he* thinks the same about Clarissa, and I quite agree with him.”

“You seem rather *épris* there,” says Dugdale, smiling. “George, as you call him, is ill, is he not ?”

“Knocked himself to bits last winter, out hunting. Ribs, leg, head, all went to smash, and even now he is only slowly recovering. No doubt he will pluck up in a hurry, now this lease worry is at an end, but at one time I confess I thought he was done for. That poor child, Clarissa, was quite ill, between grief and nursing.”

"Ah! That is what makes her look so sad, I suppose."

"Well, no—not altogether," mysteriously.

"Anything more?" turning sharply; "not a disappointment in love, surely? It is an impertinence even to imagine it."

"I may as well tell you all about it," says old Hyde, who adores the sound of his own voice, and is beginning to enjoy himself intensely. "All the world here knows the story, so as you are sure to hear it from some quarter, sooner or later, I shan't be breaking confidence by telling you. And you may as well hear a true version of it. You made a good guess: it *was* an unhappy love affair."

"He had bad taste, whoever he was," says Dugdale, with a faintly unpleasant ring in his tone. He has already begun to feel an interest in his lovely tenant, and when a man feels an interest in a woman, however slight, he takes it badly when he is told she, in her turn, has felt an interest in some foreign quarter.

"You know Sir Wilfred Haughton? Well, he was the man. They were engaged to be married about three years ago, everything was arranged; never was there a fellow so much in love, as *we* thought, when suddenly a cousin of Clarissa's came on the scene. A pretty girl, I am bound to say, but bad, sir, bad to the heart's core. There was something fetching about her, I suppose, because every man in the neighbourhood (except myself, Dugdale, I am proud to say) made an ass of himself about her. But she laid her plans cleverly, and never ceased till she had wiled Haughton from his allegiance, and, I verily believe, broke Clarissa's heart. She has never held up her head since. Fairly crushed she was, and all for a most unworthy object, as I cannot help thinking him."

"You put it mildly. A man who could be guilty of such an act must be termed an unmitigated blackguard," says Dugdale, calmly knocking the ash off his cigar.

"So I think. But the cream of the joke is to follow. Madam Violet having made her little game, and cajoled Haughton to the top of her bent, coolly threw him over at the last moment, and married a city man with no birth to mention, but unlimited coin."

"Serve him right," viciously. "I knew him slightly, but can't say I fancied him; weak, it seemed to me, and self-opinionated. He has been abroad for some time."

"Fit of the spleens. They say he is coming home at the end of the month, so I daresay he has got over it."

"How will Miss Carew like his being in the neighbourhood again?"

"She is very game," says the Major; "proud, you know, and that—she won't show what she really feels. Perhaps his coming will cure her effectually, and settle matters for ever."

"You mean, she will probably accept him a second time?"

"*Accept* him! Nonsense, sir, she will *reject* him, and that with scorn—with *scorn*!" says the Major, flushing with indignation.

A month renders the Carews very intimate with their landlord—which is hardly to be wondered at, as scarcely a day passes without his coming to Weston, avowedly to sit with George, but in reality to see Clarissa.

Now, he does not even care to conceal from himself the fact that his early admiration for her has deepened into love. Yet his attachment causes him only unhappiness, having in it all the elements of disappointment to come, Clarissa apparently being utterly indifferent to it. She is very sweet, very gentle, and treats him with all the kind familiarity of a sister, but even he cannot deceive himself into the belief that there is anything sentimental in her regard.

One evening towards the close of this month Dugdale happens to be dining at the lodge. He has dined there often of late, young Carew having taken an enormous fancy to him, being indeed almost low-spirited when he is out of his sight. All through dinner Clarissa has been singularly distraite and meditative; there is a far-off look in her clear grey eyes, her lover is quick to mark. Strolling in the garden with her, later on, through the warm, sweet, wooing July air, he suddenly breaks the long silence by saying,

"How quiet you are this evening. Has anything vexed you—disturbed you?"

"Have I betrayed myself even to you?" she says, with a smile, and a rare faint blush. "No—yes—I confess it; I *should* not be disturbed, but I *am*—in that lies my self-contempt. It makes me angry with myself to know I am annoyed, but I cannot help it. I heard to-day Sir Wilfred Haughton is coming home to-morrow!" Her voice has fallen slightly.

"Yes, I know." He has turned his face away from hers.

"Of course you have heard all that old story," she says, quite calmly, but with another blush so vivid as to bring tears to her eyes. "It seems very old now. Everyone knows it; *that* thought was very bitter to me just at first, but now I scarcely seem to mind it, and you are so good a friend I can speak to you about it. It is very disheartening, is it not," with a little constrained laugh, "that, after all one's inward lectures, one should find oneself as far from indifference as ever?"

Mistaking her meaning altogether, he winces perceptibly.

"Does his coming distress you?"

"Yes," slowly, "it distresses me; and yet I cannot say whether it makes me glad or sorry. After all, he was an old friend, before—before anything foolish occurred between us. I do not forget that."

"No doubt he has, long ere this, repented his crowning—nay, his *only* act of folly." They have got down to the wicket-gate by this time, that leads into the haggard, and he, leaning his arms upon it, continues, always with his eyes turned from hers. "What if he is coming home because the first and best love is still strong within him? It may be that he is coming to gain forgiveness."

"Oh, no, *no*!" shrinking, "I hope not. That would be terrible. I *hope* not! But," with an effort, "it is impossible."

"I think it so utterly possible, that I am almost sure of it," says Dugdale, who takes a savage pleasure in piling up his own agony. "No man, under the circumstances, would elect to come to the place again, unless with such an object."

"You frighten me," she says; and then she sighs, and brushes back her soft hair impatiently from her temples. "Would *you* act so in such a case?" she asks, presently, in a slow, dreamy tone.

Then he turns to look at her, and their eyes meet. The tender silence of coming night is all around. The faint, melodious lowing of the oxen in the far-off meadows alone breaks the stillness of the evening, that is dying with such lingering sweetness.

"I cannot answer that question," returns he, a little unsteadily; "I could not picture myself in such a case. Had I dared to love you it would have been with such a love as would have lasted to my dying day!"

Silence again. She has grown very pale, and the hand that trifles with the huge bunch of crimson roses so lately plucked, is trembling slightly. The cows are coming slowly towards them through the cool deep grass; the birds, high over their heads, are twittering drowsily a last good-night; George's voice from the verandah calls to them to return.

"You are thinking of the past?" says Dugdale, hurriedly, taking one of the roses from her.

"Yes—and of the future," replies she, in a troubled tone.

"Clarissa! you still love him?"

"How shall I tell," returns she, with a touch of passion. "I have so long brooded over my unhappy story—so often told myself I shall never again ——" She pauses abruptly. "I want to *see* him," she says, after a slight hesitation.

"Naturally," with some bitterness.

"No, you mistake. I want to see him," slowly, "because, when I do—on the *instant*—I shall know."

"Know what?" eagerly.

"My own heart," replies she, somewhat sadly.

Three days later, walking along the quiet road that leads to Weston, Clive Dugdale comes upon Clarissa and a stranger, evidently in earnest conversation. Even from the distance he can see the stranger is Sir Wilfred Haughton, and that he and Clarissa are on friendly terms. It is plainly, however, a chance encounter, because Haughton's horse is standing beside him, and even as Dugdale, with a beating heart, marks all these facts, they shake hands, and Haughton, mounting again, rides briskly away.

As Dugdale comes up with her, Clarissa turns gladly to greet him, with a bright smile. Her face is delicately flushed; there is an

unwonted brilliancy in her eyes : she is altogether a changed, and even a lovelier Clarissa than usual.

"That was Sir Wilfred?" remarks he, superfluously, regarding her curiously—jealously.

"Yes," still smiling.

"Your very first meeting with him has wrought a wonderful change in your appearance. You are pleased?"

"It was not our first meeting. Last evening he called to see us just after you had left. Had you remained to dinner as George and I wished, you would have met him."

"Should I? Thanks. The loss is not irreparable. I would rather see George and you, when alone. But you have not yet answered me; though, indeed, I scarcely need an answer when I look at you. You are brighter, more radiant, than I have ever yet seen you. You *were* pleased to see him!"

"*Very!*" emphatically. "Why not? After all, as I told you, he is an old friend; I hardly remember the time I did not know him."

"And," bending a little to look into her eyes, which meet his frankly, "you now—'*know*'?"

"Yes—now I '*know*,'" returns she, with a quiet, though very intense satisfaction.

"And you are quite happy?" There is a shade upon his face that grows deeper every second. She, having averted her eyes, fails to see it.

"Very happy," she answers, quietly. "Happier than I have been for three full years. A long time, is it not?" she asks, a little wistfully.

"Yes. I congratulate you," in a somewhat forced tone. They have reached the entrance to Weston; and he now puts out his hand to say good-bye.

"You will come in?" surprised.

"Not to-day, thank you."

"Oh, *do*," with open disappointment; "George will be so grieved if you do not."

"George must excuse me to-day; I cannot go in now," he says, almost curtly, and, raising his hat, walks determinedly away.

His heart is filled to overflowing with bitterness and sad forebodings. Is it, indeed, all over? Can his sweet dreams and happy thoughts have met with such a cruel death? Again he sees her lovely face as she turned it to greet him, flushed with content and gladness. Of course the blush had been for Haughton; already her poor wounded heart has found comfort in the very nearness of the beloved.

Pshaw! why dwell upon the inevitable, like a love-sick girl! He will throw up the whole business, leave for London in the morning, and try in absence to forget.

But when the morning comes he lingers. A faint hope—that is

almost despair, so closely does it border on it—holds him still in bondage, and compels him to stay on, and witness the final scene in this small drama.

But at the end of the second month even this faint star of hope has been drowned in the giant flood of despair. He has no longer any sustaining doubts. Day by day, meeting his rival at Weston, he notes Clarissa's kindly manner towards him, the frank warmth of her look and tones.

As for himself, her demeanour towards him has completely changed. It seems to him as though now she purposely avoids his society, and shrinks from any tête-à-tête chance may throw in his way. And yet—with an obstinacy that shocks even himself—there are moments when he cannot bring himself to believe he is altogether hateful to her. A certain softness at times, a sudden blush, a surprised glance now and again, make him persuade himself, against his common sense, she still bears for him some of her ancient friendship.

One afternoon, walking along the road to Weston, he encounters the Major coming towards him from a side walk that branches towards the west, and leads to Uplands, where dwell the Adairs. They shake hands, but, even at the moment of meeting, Dugdale becomes aware that there is an unmistakable cloud upon the Major's usually urbane brow.

"You have been to Uplands?" says Dugdale, because he has nothing else to say, and is too much the property of melancholy to care to make conversation.

"Yes," absently, "the old lady is ill again. But tell me, Clive, is it true what I have heard there, that Clarissa Carew is going to marry that fellow Haughton?"

"Have you heard it?" asks Dugdale, wincing.

"Yes—the Adairs are full of it. They say it is all settled, and that they are to be married immediately. My dear boy," says the Major, raising his hat to wipe his forehead, "it *can't* be true."

"It may be true," says Clive, gloomily. He is drawing aimless strokes with his stick upon the dusty road, and is feeling distinctly miserable.

"It *may*, sir!—what do you mean by that?" demands the Major, irascibly; "I tell you it *shan't*! It is monstrous! What! a woman like that to throw herself away upon a worthless fellow: and one who has treated her so infamously in the past! I tell you I won't hear of it. I thought Clarissa had more pride."

"And yet I do not think she is wanting in pride," says Dugdale.

"I don't know what *you* call it—but I, for one, wouldn't have believed it of her," says old Hyde, growing slightly incoherent. "I shall speak to her, and, if possible, prevent it. If I were a young man like you, Dugdale, I should make love to her myself, propose to her, and marry her under his very nose, rather than let such a sacrifice take place. But the young men of the present day," says the

Major, disgustedly, "are abominably wanting in both taste and feeling."

"I wish I could agree with you," says poor Clive, sadly.

"As no one else will interfere, *I* shall. Nothing shall prevent me. Her father and I were old cronies, and I shan't stay by and see his girl make such a fatal mistake without uttering a word of warning. I must now go home and scribble a letter or two for the post, and after that I shall walk up straight to Weston, and ask her what she means."

"I think I wouldn't if I were you," Dugdale ventures to say, mildly.

"But I shall, sir! Don't talk to me! Pouf! do you think the anger of the prettiest woman in Europe could turn *me* from my duty? *Never!*" says the Major, proudly.

Dugdale half smiles as they part company, and he continues his way to Weston. The hall-door, as usual, stands wide open during the glorious August weather, and, making his way to the study where young Carew generally sits, he enters, unannounced.

At the doorway he stands motionless a moment, seeing Carew in earnest conversation with Sir Wilfred Haughton. Hearing him, they both look up, and Carew's expression changes from cold disapprobation to quick distress.

"It is only Dugdale," says Haughton, with a curious gleam in his dark eyes, and a certain maddening sense of triumph in his slow deliberate tones. "No, do not go away, Dugdale; you are a welcome friend here, and I have no desire to conceal from you the reason of my presence here to day. I have come to ask Miss Carew's hand in marriage!"

Dugdale pales visibly, and his brows contract—otherwise he suppresses all outward symptoms of emotion. Then suddenly a wild determination to enter the lists himself, to declare aloud his affection for her, if only to let her see how well, though silently, she has been beloved, takes possession of him. Almost without allowing time for reflection, he turns to Carew, and says with forced composure,

"I too have come to Weston to-day, bound on the same errand. I love your sister, Carew, and would ask her to marry me. Let her choose between us."

George rises slowly. He is still weak, and finds a difficulty in sudden movements; a look of perplexity and discomfort pervades his handsome face; he trifles nervously with a paper-knife that lies beneath his hand.

"You distress me," he says at length, addressing both the suitors. "I hardly know what to say. Of course I shall inform my sister of the honour you have both done her, and—and—you must abide by her decision. But it grieves me to know that one of you—must——"

He pauses, and unconsciously, in his embarrassment, fixes his eyes upon Dugdale. Clive groans inwardly: to him it is a simple matter, the translation of that regretful look, the finishing of that broken sentence. "One of you must go to the wall—and you, Dugdale, are the man." So he reads it. The brother, knowing well the sister's feelings, had thought kindly to give him gentle warning of what is surely in store for him. That glance was an ill omen! Well, well! He throws up his head in angry defiance of cruel fate, and draws his breath a little hard.

At this moment a light and well-known step crossing the hall outside makes itself heard. It comes nearer; the door is thrown open, and Clarissa, fresh and sweet as the perfumed flowers in her hands, stands upon the threshold.

"Why, what a solemn conclave," she says, jestingly. "What long, long faces! But that the silence of the grave seems to reign, I should say you were all indulging in a battle royal. What is it, George?" laying her hand upon his shoulder with a soft caressing touch.

Taking down the hand, Carew holds it closely in his own and regards her with silent scrutiny for a full minute. Then glancing at the two men, he says, as though decided:

"My sister is here—she shall speak for herself. Clarissa, Sir Wilfred Haughton, and Clive Dugdale, wish to tell you—that they—love you; they have come this afternoon to ask your hand in marriage. It is for you to either refuse them both—or—make your choice between them."

He has spoken disjointedly, but to the purpose. Clarissa, growing white as the lilies in her trembling fingers, shrinks away from him, and letting her flowers fall, covers her face with her hands.

"Oh! why have you done this?" cries she: "it is terrible—it is cruel——"

"No—it is the wisest course," whispers he, hurriedly. "It will end at once all doubt and suspense. Believe me, it is better so—and kinder."

Looking up, she glances first at Sir Wilfred, who is evidently anxious, but perhaps a little too assured—then timidly at Dugdale, who is rather in the background, with his head bent downwards and his arms crossed upon his breast.

Feeling the intensity of her regard, he raises his head, and meets her gaze full. In his eyes there is a world of sorrowing, a passionate regret, a dumb agony, sad through its hopeless longing.

"Clarissa!" says Haughton, entreatingly, attempting to take her hand.

"No, *no!*" she exclaims, hastily, waving him back, her heart beating painfully. Then, "Clive, will you not speak to me?" she says, moving a step or two in his direction.

The effect is electric. At her words Dugdale starts violently, the

sadness disappears, and in its place a great gleam of joy rises and illumines his face. Yet even now he hardly dares believe in his own good fortune.

Going up to her, he imprisons her hands, and asks, in a voice so changed she scarcely knows it to be his :

"Am *I* your choice?"

"Yes," faintly.

"You *love* me, Clarissa?" almost vehemently.

"Yes," returns she, again. And then, overcome by her emotion and the situation generally, she bursts into tears: whereupon Clive, unmindful of her brother's presence, or that of his disconcerted rival, catches her in his arms; and with a sob, she lays her head upon his breast.

Leaving Weston about two hours later, he has just reached the entrance gate, when he finds himself, for the second time to-day, face to face with the valiant Major, evidently bent on slaughter.

"You see I have kept my word," says this warrior, fiercely; "I am not to be frightened, even by a frown from Venus! I have come to reason with Clarissa about this talked-of engagement."

"There is no need. *I* can tell you all about it."

"Well?" impatiently.

"It is only too true. She *is* going to be married!"

"And who, pray, told you that pretty piece of news?"

"I had it from her own lips."

"You don't say so!" exclaims the Major, staggered; then, plucking up courage again, he advances a step. "All the more cause why I should now interfere," he says, with much determination.

"I am afraid it will be too late. She and he seem very much attached to each other. I am almost sure she will not give him up."

"She will when I prove to her what a despicable scoundrel he is; and open her eyes a bit about his doings in London."

"Oh, Major! that I should live to hear you say such things!"

"*Say* them! I have said them a thousand times, and I shall say them again. I tell you, this man she is bent on marrying is a villain of the deepest dye!"

Dugdale laughs.

"Ah! *you* may make a joke of it, Dugdale; she is nothing to you, of course; *you* don't care about her future happiness, poor child! but *I* do, and I can't see her enter on such a wretched marriage without feeling grief."

"I don't think," says Clive, modestly, "it *will* be a wretched marriage."

"I hope you may be forgiven," ejaculates the Major, solemnly.

"Well," in an offended tone, "I shall go and fulfil my duty, and see what I can do."

"Don't put an end to the engagement, Major," exclaims Clive, in

a tone of affected dismay ; “ because, if you do, you will make Clarissa, and—and *me* eternally miserable.”

He has placed both his hands on old Hyde's shoulders, and is laughing lightly.

“ Eh ? What ? You don't mean to say—bless me !—What have *you* got to do with it ? ”

“ In me you behold the coming bridegroom,” says Clive, with an air of the profoundest triumph.

The Major is struck dumb for a full minute (a most unusual occurrence with him), and then gives way to a wild rapture.

“ My dear Clive—my dear, dear boy, can it be true ? Oh ! you young scamp, not to tell me sooner. My dear fellow, I am rejoiced.” And then he fairly gives way, and falling upon the unsuspecting Dugdale, treats him to a hearty hug.

“ But, Major, consider ; would you wed your pearl amongst women to a ‘ despicable scoundrel,’ a ‘ villain of the deepest dye ’ ? When are you going to open her eyes to all my scandalous ‘ doings in London ’ ? ”

“ None of your chaff,” says the Major, threatening him with his stick, “ but come straight home with me, and let us drink the future Mrs. Dugdale's health in a bumper of champagne.”



HAUNTED.

When candle-flames burn blue,
Between the night and the morning,
I know that it is you,
My love, that was so true
And that I killed with scorning.

The watch dogs howl and bay ;
I pale, and leave off smiling.
Only the other day
I held your heart in play,
Intent upon beguiling.

A little while ago
I wrung your soul with sighing ;
Or brought a sudden glow
Into your cheek by low,
Soft answers, in replying.

My life was all disguise,
A mask of feints and fancies ;
I used to lift my eyes,
And take you by surprise
With smiles and upward glances.

And now, where'er I go,
Your sad ghost follows after ;
And blue the flame burns low,
And doors creak to and fro,
And silent grows the laughter.

G. B. STUART.

ANDRÉ, THE BEGGAR BOY.

BY F. E. M. NOTLEY.

“FOR the love of charity, monsieur——”

It was the voice of a child by the wayside, begging. I had not seen him till my stout staff nearly touched the little ragged shoes that stood rooted in mud and moisture among the wheel ruts.

“For the love of charity, and the holy Virgin, monsieur, give me a sou. My father is blind.”

He spoke in the patois of the Ardennes, and for a moment my ear scarcely caught the meaning of the half French, half Latin words of that quaint old dialect.

I answered him in French. “And even if your father be blind, my boy, why should you beg? Surely, it is better to work than to be a beggar.”

“I have the Mayor’s permission to beg for my father, and Monsieur le Curé’s also,” said the boy, proudly.

“You may have the whole world’s leave if you can get it, but I never give to beggars.”

The boy looked into my face as I spoke, and met my scornful gaze with the frankest amazement that ever shone out of a child’s eyes; then suddenly dropping his eyes to the ground, I saw the lids quiver, and tears fall slowly. He brushed them away with a little brown hand, and steadying his voice, spoke out again bravely.

“You are an English gentleman; is it wrong in England to beg?”

“It is disgraceful in my country to beg. An honest, good boy would rather work his fingers to the bone than disgrace himself by begging idly by the roadside day after day.”

“Disgraceful to beg—to beg for one’s father!” returned the boy, in a tone of wonder. And this time his eyes, without tears, met mine in sad bewilderment. “Ah! sir, yours must be a hard country if they reckon it wicked there to ask alms.”

“We do not think it wicked to ask alms in a proper way, but to beg every day is idle and vicious.”

I was turning away from him, when his clasped hands held towards me, and the deep, painful flush that crimsoned his face at my words, called me back with renewed curiosity.

“You do not understand, good gentleman. I am not idle—I am not vicious—indeed I am not; ask our good curate if I am. And I do not beg every day. I ask permission to beg once a fortnight. I come out by the roadside every other Thursday, good sir, and then I return to my work.”

His explanation only puzzled me the more, and I felt truly that, however great my horror might be of begging, there was some new

element mixed with it here not to be found among the rags and wretchedness of English beggary.

"Ah! André, lad, is that you?" said a cheery voice, suddenly. "Here are your two sous, my bonnie boy, and right welcome you are to them too."

I looked round and beheld the queerest little figure imaginable. Short, thick-set, stout, strong, and ruddy, dressed in bright woollen petticoats, bright blue stockings, a snowy cap, of a shape no English milliner could conceive, and carrying on her back a basket taller by half a yard than herself—a most comical basket, that stretched from her head nearly to her heels; a basket that would have extinguished her completely had she only put it on the wrong way—a way in which it was my good fortune to behold it put on, a few days afterwards, at Liège, in the only street quarrel which I ever saw in Belgium. Two women were wrangling with very fierce voices, and gestures that would have set Cheapside in a roar, when, all of a sudden, one of them, slily unbuckling her basket, popped it over her antagonist's head, and completely extinguished her. Restored instantly to good-humour, she ran away laughing, leaving her enemy like a human candle suddenly put out, standing in blank darkness, bewildered and silenced. On being extricated from her wicker extinguisher, amid roars of laughter, she departed without uttering a word, and with a very comical look of discomfiture on her shrewish face.

"Truly an excellent method," said I to myself, "for utterly routing and demolishing a scold."

"A good boy, monsieur," remarked the little market-woman; "a very good boy is our André; he walks all the way from Dinant, and that's a long five leagues, to beg for his blind father."

"But why beg?" said I, half angry at the woman's praise of such a deed. "Is there no work to be found for a sturdy boy in this country?"

"Not much, monsieur; but André does his best. He works for the bargemen on the river, and earns sometimes six sous a day. So he loses always a day's work when he begs for his father. And that's hard; for since his mother's death the child has had no home, and his little earnings keep him but roughly."

Leaning her long basket against a poplar tree, the woman, with a motherly look upon her kind face, bade him take a few vegetables from it for his father; and then, with a curtsey, strangely stiffened by the wicker armour on her back, she wished me good-day, and departed.

I was not much the wiser for her talk, and being of a curious disposition, I was not content to remain in ignorance of the strange anomaly that made begging a virtue. As yet, I had begrudged the boy even a sou, and as I looked at his wonderfully patient face, so full of a trust and faith I could scarcely fathom, my heart smote me.

"Surely there is something here beyond my understanding?" I said; so I put two sous into his hand; and I did this because the boy's belief that I should give him alms was so strong that I saw the idea of a refusal had never entered his mind.

It is a sad thing to destroy faith—to discourage the natural human trust in kindness that springs spontaneously in young souls, as yet unsharpened and unsoiled by contact with great cities, their cunning, disbelief, and cruelty. I could not do it in André's case; I left him his faith in human charity at a cost to myself of a penny, and I felt none the poorer as I put my purse back in my pocket.

The child looked at the money, and then at me, and smiled. His smile was full of trust and confidence.

"I knew you were a kind gentleman," he said.

Glancing on the two sous in his small palm, I smiled also. "Those are not common coppers," whispered my thoughts; "some angel blessed them, surely. They help to-day to strengthen that great human faith in human good which stands like a tower of defence against the mocker, the atheist, and the slayer of souls." A few moments ago, and I was vexed that I heard the boy's praises; now I was vexed that I heard my own. Still, ignorant though I was, I felt certain I had done a kindness, and not a wrong, in transgressing my principles, so I would not disclaim the goodness with which he crowned me.

"Where does your father live, André? I should like to go and see him."

A sparkle of pleasure leapt into his dark eyes like a sunbeam. "Is monsieur really so good? My father lives at the village of Saint-Eglise; it is a good league from this. It lies among the hills, quite in the Forest of the Ardennes."

Let it be observed, in passing, that until you get to Saint-Hubert, in the centre of the Belgian Ardennes, the peasantry will never acknowledge that the actual ground on which you stand is in the forest.

"And how shall I find him, André, when I get to the village?"

"Ask for blind Gustave, monsieur, and anyone will show you the cottage where he lodges. I wish I could walk with you, monsieur; but I am going now to the farms and châteaux, and I shall not get to Saint-Eglise till sunset."

"Then you do not stay here all day?" I asked, surprised.

"Oh, no, monsieur. I never stay after I have gained six sous. That pays one week's lodging for my father; and a kind lady, at the big château yonder, always gives me the six sous for the other week; I am going there now, sir. I always pay the rent, you see, once a fortnight. My father is a very honest man, everyone knows that; they trust him willingly till my begging-day comes round. Good-morning, kind gentleman."

Shouldering his large wallet, and then bowing to me like a prince, he ran off, breaking into a whistle as he climbed the hill.

"There are degrees, then, even in beggary," said I, philosophizing as I walked. "This is the very prince of beggars—an aristocrat who makes his calling noble, and prides himself on his respectability; who boasts of honesty and credit, and punctuality in payments; verily a beggar who might figure in our friend *Punch*, and raise a laugh.

"And yet, no," said I, drawing back my thoughts from their travels in Fleet Street and the Strand. "The sturdy London beggar who bragged of his honour and honesty would be an impostor and liar; but this child of the forest, who listens so simply while he hears his own praises sounded for begging, is made of other stuff. There is a system, too, in his mendicancy which tickles my fancy. He stands by the roadside once a fortnight, and pays his father's debts."

I walked on and on, through scenery full of wonders and dreams. Here, a great rugged hill, bare and stony; there, a huge rock standing alone, glistening in naked strength and solitude; then, suddenly, a precipice, so abrupt and terrible, that the mind recoiled from its very thought, and the eye, in relief, turned to the little heath bells, swinging on their tiny stalks, amid a scented breeze and music of summer flies.

Ha! a monstrous butterfly, in black and gold! Long pointed rays of brightest amber, bordered by vandyked lace—a veritable beauty, a "joy for ever," if a pin were only through his slender body, and he lay "alone in his glory" in this pasteboard box of mine. There! he lights upon the juniper and sucks the berry—a gin-drinker! I have no pity for him now; this golden pin shall kill him without mercy. I have him! No, I have only a bunch of juniper-berries, and a prickle in my thumb. And the flashing rays are laughing in the sun, while Prince Amber sucks his "peckie"* from another bush.

He leads me on with glistening impudence, tempting my feet to the very edge of danger, as I skirt the precipice; and then he goes down, down, down, gleaming and flashing like a winged jem, as he descends with taunting ease into the gorge, while I, with greedy eyes and covetous hands, and golden lance poised ready, stand staring, a baffled slayer of the innocent.

I put the empty box into my pocket, and ask of the winds and heather the way to Saint-Eglise.

Oh, what a dell is this before my enchanted sight! All the stately trees and soft green herbage, all the little flowers and sparkling streams have rushed from off the hills and hidden themselves down here. And they shine, and laugh, and glisten, and glow, and shake their leaves in ecstasy, till every sunbeam dances in the joy of its own light, and I, silent in wondering happiness, scarce see the brightness of the valley because of thankful tears. And what an atmosphere is this to live in! It is not air, it is all sunlight, clear and

* Peckie is the name given in the Ardennes to a sort of gin made there.

radiant as the sky itself, without even a shadow of the earth's heaviness to mar a single beam. Every breath drawn in is a pleasure; and my worldly trouble seems so light, that heart and brain fling off care and laugh at it, as it goes floating away on the bright winds.

Saint-Eglise lies on a sunny slope of the forest, with the great hills all around it, not vapoury and indistinct, as in Ireland, but standing out with wonderful clearness in the bright ambient air.

As I ran down the steep street, I met Monsieur le Curé face to face.

I took off my hat. "Will monsieur have the goodness to direct a stranger to the house of blind Gustave?"

"Sir, I will go with you," said the priest, with great politeness, "and show you the way."

We walked on side by side. "I am interested in the man," said I, "because to-day, on the Dinant road, I met his son, and I was grieved to see the boy begging."

"Grieved!" cried the priest. "He is a good boy, and begs nobly for his father."

I turned towards him with a resigned air; here was another respectable member of society endowing beggary with a patent of nobility, and I could only bow and smile acquiescence. Nevertheless, my countenance expressed bewilderment.

"You are an Englishman," said the priest; "you have a poor-law in your country: we have none; therefore, when some poor forlorn creature falls into misery, the mayor and the priest of his village give him permission to beg, not every day, but once a week, or more seldom, according to the urgency of the case."

Here was a sudden enlightenment; and I craved earnestly for further intelligence.

"And have the poor no help save this licensed begging? Surely such a task falls hard on the aged, the sick, and the high-minded." I hesitated at the last word.

"It may sound strange to you," returned the priest, "but the poor here count it no shame to wear the mendicant's badge. I have read that in England it is a painful degradation to accept your parish relief, or to enter your hospitals." He meant workhouse, or union, but I did not correct him. "In our parishes here," he continued, "a piece of land, called the Commune, belongs to the poor. Each family, according to its number, has its portion allotted to them to cultivate. In the same way, every October, when the wood is cut in the forest, we give to each family its share. It is seldom that this fuel is not sufficient for the winter."

"There is so much of the forest uncultivated, that this system acts well in the Ardennes, but it would, of course, be impossible elsewhere."

"Blind Gustave, for whom you ask," resumed the curate, "is also a cripple. His cottage was burnt down two years ago; his cow,

housed in the kitchen, as is often the case here, was burnt to death ; it was in his efforts to save the poor animal that he was so sadly scorched as to be blinded and lamed."

"You tell me a sorrowful story," said I.

"But that is not all. Three days after the fire his wife died from fright, and grief, and exposure to cold. Save a chair or two, nothing in his cottage was saved from the flames ; and his eldest son, on the very day of his mother's funeral, was drawn as a conscript. He is now in garrison at Antwerp."

"Truly, if there be any excuses for begging, here are plenty," I answered. "I wish I had made my four sous a franc," I said to myself, sadly.

"Poor Gustave lay long in bed in a neighbour's house. On the night of the fire he had lain down to rest a hale man of forty ; he rose from his sick bed blind, helpless, and aged. Can you wonder the Mayor and I gave him liberty to ask for alms ?"

"Since you have no poor-laws, and the man could no longer work, you could ill refuse him the poor liberty to beg," I answered.

The priest's pale face flushed slightly. "I see you think your own customs the best," he said ; "but ours are kinder. When you have seen Gustave, you shall judge."

We entered the cottage as he spoke. The blind man sat by the window, twisting a few willows into a rough basket. He looked up on hearing us approach.

"Take a chair, Monsieur le Curé," he said. "You have a stranger with you, sir."

"Ah, Gustave, you know it is not the step of an Ardennais you hear. It is a gentleman who saw your son this morning."

The man's sightless face now turned towards me eagerly. "The best of boys, sir, is André—a dear, good child. He goes begging for me, sir, because he knows it would be hard indeed for me to travel from house to house, blind and crippled as I am. Still, I would have done it, and my sister's little girl offered to lead me by the hand, but André took all on himself. And he is proud too, Monsieur le Curé, as you know ; for the good Mayor gave him leave to beg every Thursday, but when he had tried it for two weeks, and found I had a little surplus over, he took the money to you, and begged you to give it to the other poor. Since then, sir,"—turning again to me—"he has only asked for alms once a fortnight, and I always have enough, thank God."

"Your misfortunes, Gustave, are known at all the châteaux and farms around," said the priest ; "and everyone has something ready for André when he comes."

"For his sake, sir," said the blind man ; "they all love André. How can they help it ? He was but nine years old when this misfortune came on me, and he has kept his helpless father ever since." Tears, not in the sightless eyes, trembled in the man's

voice, and seizing his work hurriedly he began to weave again with awkward fingers.

"You would not like to go away into a hospital crowded with strangers, Gustave?" asked the Curé.

"The good God forbid, sir. I was born and married in this village. I shall die here, and be buried with my wife. But before that day comes I shall play with André's children, and tell them often what a good son he was."

"In that hospital I speak of, Gustave, the old people are shut up by themselves; they cannot speak to the little children—not even their own—or play with them."

An expression of pain and wonder grew into the man's scarred face, then it broke into a smile. "Ah, Monsieur le Curé, you are joking with me. In the whole world there can be no such cruel and barbarous place for the poor."*

The Curé turned and looked at me. I was ashamed, and held my peace.

"And have you told the gentleman how André found work at Dinant by the river-side, and keeps himself that he may not burden me? He is quite rich, he says, as he never takes a sou from the few pence he begs for me."

"That is quite true," said the Curé, turning to me; "the child begs for his father, never for himself; and when he has gained the little sum that keeps Gustave for the coming fortnight, he asks for no more."

I would have said "Are you sure of that?" but the blind man's sightless face was turned towards me, listening eagerly to these praises of his son, and I was not cynic enough to utter my insulting doubt.

"André walks the whole way from Dinant," continued the Curé, "on his begging-day, besides going his rounds from house to house. Some Thursdays he comes here worn out with fatigue."

"That is a sad truth," said the blind man, as he dropped his rough basket on the ground. "Oh, sir! shall I never be able to gain enough to save my dear boy from this hard work?" Here he stopped, and caught the basket up eagerly. "Look, sir, it is better, is it not? André says I am growing quite skilful. He got five sous for the last basket he took to Dinant."

The Curé, glancing at my face, smiled and shook his head. Then I guessed that those five sous came from little André's hard earnings.

I took the mis-shapen basket in my hand. "And since you have improved so much," said I, "this basket must be worth more than the one André sold. Finish it for me, and let Monsieur le Curé name its price. If André got five sous for his, this must certainly be worth ten. Why, this is double the basket the other was."

* Nevertheless, the hospitals for the aged poor in France and Belgium have very strict rules.

"Do you think so?" said the man; and his scarred face was radiant.

I held a ten-sou piece towards the Curé, but he put my hand back.

"The basket is a good basket, Gustave," he remarked; "but it is not worth the stranger's ten sous. You must not hope to get more than five yet awhile."

He changed my half-franc, and gave me back five sous. The coppers vexed me as I put them into my pocket. And I had thought myself so generous that morning when I gave two sous to André.

Blind Gustave chinked his sous with a great clatter, and put them on the window-seat before him. "André will see them there directly he comes in," he said. "And where can I send the basket for the gentleman?" he added, eagerly; "I can finish it in an hour if I work."

"Send it to me, Gustave," returned the Curé; "your little niece can bring it. Adieu, Gustave; it is nearly vesper time, I must leave you."

I went with the good priest to his house, and when he opened a little cupboard to give me a glass of common wine, I saw upon the shelf a rough, ill-made basket.

"So it never went to Dinant?" I exclaimed.

"No; it was a present to me from little André," he said. "Poor Gustave's work is quite unsaleable."

"Ah! why did you not let me give a miserable ten-sou piece for the basket I have bought?" I cried.

"Would you tax the child so heavily?" returned the priest. "Had you given that, Gustave would hope for the same sum for every basket André gives away, and the poor boy would not disappoint his father."

I was dumb before the rebuke, seeing my error.

"Wait," continued the Curé, "till André gets a better post; by the time he is fifteen the basket will be worth a franc."

That time came and went long ago; but the mis-shapen basket at five sous exists still in my cabinet of rarities, as a memento of little André, the Beggar Boy of the Ardennes.



SMOKING A WITCH.

A Donegal Legend.

BY LETITIA M'CLINTOCK.

"I 'M 'feared to go wi' you the nicht, Tam."

"'Feared? Is it 'feared you are? It's the fine, brave man you are, for certain."

These last words, spoken in a tone of withering scorn, were addressed to Tom Doolan by his comrade and neighbour, Jack Devenny.

The two men were about to launch their boat, and row across the Lough to cut osiers on the island; and Tom, whose face was pale, and whose step tottered, hung back when the time came to take his place and begin to handle his oar.

It was a sunny August day. The mountains, covered with heather, glowed a warm crimson in the sunshine; while the cornfields were like sheets of gold, and Tamney Lough was a mirror to reflect unbrokenly the blue sky and sailing clouds.

Far away beyond Mulroy, an inlet of the Atlantic, stretched other mountains, tier upon tier, the nearest hills purple, the more distant ones like smoke-coloured phantoms against the sky. Even the acres on acres of bog that lay between the cornfields had a beauty of their own. Everything was silent. There was no whirr and bleat of snipe—no cry of gull or plover. Smoke rose from the chimneys of the little mud cabins scattered here and there over the country; but there were no voices to be heard; only in the village of Tamney there was some slight traffic and stir.

"'Feared is it you are, Tam?" repeated Devenny, as he shoved off from the land.

"Ay—the witch! the witch!" faltered the other, paler than before.

On a sloping field just above the Lough, was a cabin no better than those in the village, and Tom raised his timid eyes towards it while he whispered: "The witch! the witch!"

Betty Moriarty had lived there as long as the oldest inhabitant could remember. Paddy Steven, who had been born in the year 1708, declared that she had seemed an old woman when he was a boy; and now, in 1800, she looked younger than he.

There were other circumstances that made Betty's neighbours regard her with awe.

She had no ostensible means of support, yet had she plenty of everything in her cottage:—a pile of the driest turf which no one had seen cut, or drawn home from the bog; quantities of milk and butter that she had not bought at the shop; clothes that, like the

garments of the children of Israel, "waxed not old." All this seemed to be, not merely comfort, but wealth and splendour in the eyes of the simple people. Many a woman, who happened to have a small churning, firmly believed Betty to have drawn away the butter from her churn, but was afraid to quarrel with her, and, therefore, spoke of her loss in guarded whispers.

The only person who had had courage to reproach the witch was Tom Doolan, whom she had now reduced to an abject state of fear.

Some months before the beginning of our story Betty had kissed Tom's youngest boy without saying "God bless you for a bonnie wean," and the child had pined away ever since. Father Dan, indeed, had confirmed the suspicions of the parents by certifying that the little fellow was suffering from the baneful influence of an evil eye.

No coppers of Betty's ever found their way into the priest's purse; no exhortations of his induced her to appear at either chapel or station.

When Tom Doolan had openly charged her with having bewitched his child, and had driven her down the village street, not, indeed, lifting his own hand to her, but permitting his boys to pelt her with mud and pebbles, she had turned to shake her stick at him, and to threaten vengeance, muttering curses, "not loud but deep."

"She said she'd waste me to skin an' bone: she said her eye'd be on me sleeping an' waking," faltered the trembling man.

"Whisht, wi' your foolitchness," reproved his companion.

Little Eileen Devenny, too young at six years old to be afraid of the witch, came to old Betty's door at that moment, and peeped in.

She saw the old woman pour water into a large tub that stood in the middle of the room, and place a wooden dish in it; and, full of interest and curiosity, she walked into the cabin.

"There, wean," said Betty, "you watch thon tub, an' tell me what the wee dish does, an' I'll gie you a piece wi' a taste o' butter an' sugar on it."

The witch crouched by the hearth, with her pointed chin supported on her skinny, clawlike hands. Her face was thin and furrowed; her nose meagre and hooked; her eyes cruel and cunning; and the long teeth that her parted lips disclosed while she muttered incantations looked cruel too.

"What is it you're sayin', Betty?" asked the child, surprised at the old woman's continued low murmurings.

"Watch the wee dish, child, an' tell me what you see."

"Oh, Betty, Betty, the dish is going round an' round in the tub!"

"Is it, wean? Faix, that'll do bravely."

More muttering.

"What's the dish doing now, Eileen, mavourneen?"

"Oh—oh—oh! Musha, musha! it's spinning round as fast as

anything ! It's turning over ! There ! It's full o' water—it's gone to the bottom o' the tub !”

“That's right,” and Betty rubbed her skinny claws together, and grinned with pleasure. “Thon's your daddy's boat that's sunk in Tamney Lough,” she chuckled, “an' thon thief o' the world, thon rascal Tom Doolan's in her, an' he'll be drowned. Curse him ! he set his boys to pelt me wi' mud an' stanes. Let him drown an' burn,” she continued in a lower tone,

“ ‘Nae candle at his head,
Nae priest beside his bed,
Nae winding-sheet, nae hearse,
Nae coffin for his corse.’ ”

When little Eileen caught these dreadful words she became frightened, and ran to the door. The sky was as clear as ever, except directly above the osier island on Tamney Lough, where a heavy cloud seemed to hang ; while white-crested waves, driven by the wind, washed over the upturned boat, which dashed, rudderless, up and down upon the rocky point of the island.

It was a strange sight : the furious storm was confined to that one spot, while on all other sides the landscape lay glowing in August sunshine.

“My daddy's boat's lost ! He'll be drowned !” said the child, returning to Betty's side, and beginning to cry.

“Hurrah ! Hurrah !” cried the witch,

“ ‘Nae candle at his head,
Nae priest beside his bed.’ ”

The awfulness of the partial storm had struck others besides little Eileen. Three or four people in the village street had seen the Lough become lashed into fury in a moment, and had also watched the boat being overturned ; and, as quickly as possible, another boat was launched, and the bodies of Doolan and Devenny were sought for.

Jack Devenny was brought to shore, and after restoratives had been used, he recovered consciousness.

“Where's Tam ?” were the first words he said.

“We canna get him,” was the reply, and Tom's widow wrung her hands, and sobbed bitterly.

“They'll no get him,” chuckled Betty from her post of observation at her cabin door on the hill overhanging Tamney Lough :

“ ‘Nae winding-sheet, nae hearse,
Nae coffin for his corse.’ ”

One or two of the searchers overheard her, and they shook their fists in her face with impotent rage.

All that day and all the next day they sought, but Tom Dóolan's body could not be found. It was, indeed, *never* found, and the

lake was regarded with superstitious horror for long years afterwards.

But to return to the witch. Little Eileen was an intelligent child, and she told her father how Betty had bade her watch the dish in the tub of water, while she had been muttering low to herself; how it had turned round and round, sinking at last to the bottom; and how Betty had exclaimed, "Ay, that's yer father's boat, an' Tom Doolan, the thief an' villain, 'ill be drowned!"

Devenny was not quite so unmanned by superstitious dread as his neighbours; besides which, he was sorry for the loss of his comrade, and he determined that his death should be avenged. Feeling his way very cautiously, he found a couple of fitting accomplices among the kneeling crowd in the chapel-yard next Sunday, and he settled with them what was to be the witch's fate.

One night, when all was silent in the village of Tamney, the three men stole out of Devenny's cottage, and coasted the reedy edge of the Lough, in whose gloomy depths poor Doolan was lying. No candle, or priest, or wake, or burial had the poor fellow had, and they shuddered as they passed his unknown grave, crossing themselves piously, and thinking of his wandering soul. The water-hens were disturbed by their stealthy tread, and a flock of plover flew overhead, uttering their wild, almost human cries. On they went, cautiously mounting the hill, and pausing several times to listen before they reached the witch's door. The reason for this caution was that, Donegal being in a disturbed state, parties of yeomanry scoured the country every night, and apprehended anybody whom they found abroad after nine o'clock. All lights were to be extinguished at that hour, so Betty's dip candle had long been out, and no glimmer appeared at her single tiny window.

"Where's the kale-stalk?" asked one of the men. They climbed upon the roof, stopped up the chimney, and then putting the cabbage-stalk into the keyhole, blew clouds of sulphur through it into the cabin.

"We'll smoke her the way his reverence smoked the bees," said they, stationing themselves at the keyhole in turn; and they did not desist from their labour until dawn appeared.

So they smothered the witch: she was cold and dead next day when the door was opened; and as there were no coroners' inquests in those days, her being found dead excited but little attention. Indeed, at the time of the Union, Ireland was in so disorganised a state, that the death of one old woman in her bed was but little noticed. The manner of her end was known to her old neighbours around Tamney Lough; but it was never spoken of except in whispers, though years afterwards parents pointed to the ruined wall-steads upon the hillside, and told their little children what the witch's fate had been. The writer was told the story by an old man whose mother had lived in Tamney at the time.

On our venturing to doubt the existence of witches at the present day, he declared there was then (August, 1877), to his certain knowledge, a witch living close to his own farm; and he pointed out a pretty, fair-haired woman, mother of a large family, who has only one cow, yet sells quantities of butter.

She has a slight figure, as well as blue eyes and flaxen hair, and we thought her a pleasant sight as she tripped along the Tamney road to market, followed by her little crowd of whiteheaded children. The uninitiated, at least, look at her with pleasure; but the Roman Catholics cross themselves furtively when they meet her, and the old and ignorant among her Protestant neighbours regard her with evident fear and dislike.

"Do you mean to say that she is able to draw the butter away from your churn?" we asked our old friend the farmer.

"Troth is she, miss; there's nae divilment too hard or too bad for thae witch-women. Sure she turns hersel' into a hare every summer nicht, an' milks the cows in the fields. I ha' started a big hare from amang my ain cows in this very field, an' as sure as I'm a livin' sinner, it made for yon hole in the back o' Norah's house."

"Do you really think Norah's the hare?"

"Think it, miss? God bless your innocent wit! I'm *sure* of it. It wad be a charity to the country-side to shoot her wi' a bit o' siller—in troth, if I was as souple as I used to be, I'd do it mysel'."

"Does it take long to turn her back into a woman?"

"Is it long, miss? Not a minute. She just says a wheen words that the bad man learned her, an' she's in her ain shape again."

"Is Norah the only witch in the country?"

"Na, na; there's her mother at Coolback, and her grandmother at Milford; all the breed o' them Taylors was witches; but there's warlocks too: I mind to ha' seen ane o' them when I was a wee chiel the height o' my stick."

"Oh, please tell me all about it!"

I was sketching in the old farmer's own meadow, behind the witch's cottage, and he stood near me, leaning on his stick; and as I washed in the delicate or gorgeous tints of my picture, I listened to his weird tale.

"It was in the County Derry," he began, "that all my people was born and bred. The Derry gentlemen was great riders, an' fond of hunting, and it was aye a spree for the wee boys to follow the hunt. I could run nigh hand as fast as a hound mysel' in them days. One day (I mind it as weel as if it was yesterday) we couldna start a hare awa, an' the gentlemen was all out o' patience, when we come upon an ould man sitting cobbling shoes, an' herding cows, in a wild kind o' place below the Birdstown mountains.

"'Wad your honours wish me to start a hare for yez?' says the ould man, risin' to his feet.

“ ‘Ay, surely,’ says the gentlemen, ‘for we canna find a hare this day, at all at all.’

“ ‘Weel,’ says the ould man, ‘if I find a hare in thon wood,’ says he, ‘will yez gie me five shillin’ when the run is over?’

“ ‘Ay, surely, good man, you’ll get the five shillin’,’ says they.

“Wi’ that the old fellow down wi’ his awl, and the brogue he was cobbling, an’ into a clump o’ bushes that was about a hundred yards off the knowe where we found him.

“He wasna three minutes in the wood till a big hare ran out an’ the hounds after it, an’ awa over the country. Weel, we had the best run o’ that season, but the hounds couldna get up wi’ the hare ava; and at last it brung them back to the knowe fornenst the wood, and ran in amang the trees, just where it ran out in the morning. The hounds lost it there, an’ the old fellow stepped out o’ the wood an’ up to the huntsman, ‘An’ whar’s my five shillin’?’ says he. Weel, he got the money, an’ then he smiled up in the gentleman’s face, an’ ‘Wasn’t that weel run for an old man?’ says he. Now, my lady, that’s as true as gospel: I ha’ seen quare things in my time. Will I tell you about the black pig that I found in the potato-field?”

“Please do; I should like to hear it.”

These wild fancies suited the surrounding landscape. Witchcraft seemed to have a fitting home among the mountain lakes and rugged hills of Donegal; and fairyland might still exist in the dells and slopes, amid bowers of eglantine where Titania could have slept.

The farmer’s stories had, for the moment, all the effect of truth: he had left “boastful youth” very far behind him, and we rejoiced to have made his acquaintance in his “narrative old age.”

“My father,” he began, “was yard-man to his honour Sir William Francis, of Castle Francis, in the County Derry, when one summer evening him and me seen a wee slip o’ a black pig running along the potato ridges in his honour’s home park. I was a brave runner, an’ I after the little pig. I caught it, an’ held it till my father came up, and, between us, we got it into the yard at the Castle, and shut it into a sty to itsel’. His honour, Sir William, made enquiries far an’ wide to find out if anyone had lost a wee black pig; in troth, I willna just say, for fear I’d tell a lie, but I do think he had it printed in the newspaper; but naebody wad own the pig, and deil a ane wad tak’ a present o’t.

“So there it stopped, an’ it ate an’ ate till it was that heavy it couldna get in an’ out at the door o’ the sty, an’ a bed had to be made for’t in the cart-shed.

“It got on to be November, an’ the butcher came to look at the master’s pigs.

“ ‘Come, Gallagher, an’ look at the pig that dropped frae the clouds,’ says Sir William.

“Those was his honour’s very words, an’ my father an’ the men in the yard looked at each other when they heerd him.

“ ‘Thon’s the best pig o’ them all,’ says Gallagher ; ‘he’s seven hundredweight if he’s a pound.’ ”

“ ‘Well, you can kill him the first thing to-morrow morning,’ says Sir William, turning awa, careless like, frae the door o’ the cart-shed.

“ ‘We didna wish to kill him becane o’ the quare way he come to the place ; but the master’s bidding had to be done ; so we got a big vat o’ boiling water ready, for we knowed the carcage wad be heavy ; and then we went to the cart-shed. Was the water boiled when we went to the cart-shed ? I’ll no just say, for fear I’d tell a lie, but, anyway, I’m sure my father had the fire made to boil it.

“ ‘Weel, your ladyship, when we went to kill the pig, there was nae pig in the shed, an’ there was nae pig to be seen anywhere, though we searched the country far an’ wide.

“ ‘His honour said we *be* to ha’ left the door open, but I put it to you, how could a pig weighing seven hundredweight ha’ disappeared, so that nae track o’ him could be found ? an’ wha could ha’ stole a pig o’ thon size ? ’ ”

“ ‘What do you think really happened ? ’ ”

“ ‘I think the pig heered the talk about killing him, an’ he went awa.’ ”

“ ‘But what was he ? Was he a fairy, a warlock, or what ? ’ ”

“ ‘If I know, my lady ! but this I do know—all luck left Castle Francis from that day. His honour lost a lawsuit he was engaged in, and his big bull that was brung over frae England, an’ was worth twa hundred pound, choked himsel’ wi’ a turnip. Troth, it’s a dangerous thing to despise luck that comes to your door ! ’ ”



THE MAGIC OF A FACE.

I WAS coming home to marry my cousin Alice. For two years I had been engaged to her, and, with the short exception of two months, had been parted from her for that time. My work as a civil engineer took me to San Domingo, and there I had waited from month to month, expecting to finish the duties assigned me, and hoping to reap my hard-earned reward.

It came at last. I could return, well-off in health and pocket, to claim my love, whose constancy had been a matter of great joy and consolation to me.

Our childhood had been passed together, and our schooldays were linked to each other by many a surreptitiously copied exercise or example, many a divided luncheon. Advancing years only increased our intimacy. She grew into a tall, slight, fair-haired girl, with pale blue eyes, a delicate skin, almost too white in its fairness, with a tremulous mouth, and clear-cut, quivering nostrils ; I, into a young fellow six feet high, strong and vigorous, and with an over-abundant supply of physical energy.

It was during one of my vacations, when I was about twenty-three, that the idea developed in my mind to make Alice Arden my wife. One afternoon in the early autumn, as we stood together in the midst of dying nature, with all its brilliant flashes of colour surrounding us, I asked her to marry me. She said, quite simply and calmly :

“ Yes, Basil ; and I will try to be a very good wife.”

I remember, as she stood, she held a branch of pink maple leaves, shot with deeper crimson, between her eyes and the dying sun ; they cast a lovely rosy reflection over cheek and brow, and made her beautiful indeed.

Two months from that time I accepted work in San Domingo, leaving Alice betrothed to me, and content to wait for my return. This, unfortunately, was put off from time to time ; and thus it was two years from that autumn evening, when we had stood side by side and plighted our troth, before I could return to claim her. In the meantime Alice's letters had come as regularly as was possible.

The last year had been marked by a great event in Alice's life. She had been abroad with some friends, spending eight months in travelling through the old world, mostly in Italy. I had had but one letter from her since her return, and that a short and rather sad one. I fancied she was feeling the reaction from the past months

of excitement ; after so long a time of change and variety, the quiet of a New England village was likely to be depressing, especially as Alice possessed few resources within herself. She neither played nor sang, painted nor wrote, nor was she much of a reader. Yet for all such things she showed an appreciation that betokened a vein in her character not yet explored.

The last rays of a November sun were bathing all the country far and near, as I walked up the village street to the large stone house, surrounded by trees, on the top of the hill, where Alice and her widowed mother lived with her father's unmarried brother, Judge Arden. How little changed everything was ! I had been gone so long, and met with such varied experience, it did not seem possible that life could drone on anywhere in the same humdrum fashion for twenty-four months as it had done here. Alas ! I was to find the change where it would strike deepest, and be hardest to bear. I walked up the avenue shaded by maple and birch trees, all crimson and gold in the twilight ; but, strange to say, I met no one. Usually at this time I would find Alice seated in her favourite place, half-way between the house and the gate, her golden head catching reflections from the dying sunbeams, or passing to and fro on the grass, followed by all the dogs. Now there was no one to be seen. The chairs were set back stiffly against the closed blinds of the parlour windows, no dogs flew out to greet me, no sweet face welcomed me from door or window. What did it portend ?

Impatiently I sprang up the steps, turned the handle, but could not enter ; the door was locked. Judge Arden's door locked ! here was change indeed ! I rang the bell impetuously ; after a time the door was opened by a maid, a stranger to me.

"Where is Miss Alice ?" was my first abrupt question. "Will you tell her that I am here, waiting to see her."

"Miss Alice sees no one, sir," was the servant's reply. "I can take in your name to Mrs. Arden."

Good heavens ! Alice sees no one ; and I, Basil Grey, the spoiled child of the family, must send in my name to Mrs. Arden ! I laughed out in my amazement.

"Tell Mrs. Arden," I said, "that Basil Grey has come."

The girl withdrew quietly, and almost immediately returned.

"Mrs. Arden begs you will walk into the library, sir. Not that way, sir," as I was turning to the old room, "the library is the other side the hall."

The library of Arden House looking to the east instead of the west. Change upon change !

The maid opened the door ; I saw at a glance the room was empty. A low fire smouldered on the hearth, the window curtains were unlooped, and hung down in careless folds ; on the various tables, where once would have bloomed flowers and hanging vines, now lay only a few books, piled together hastily ; a general sense of

gloom and depression hung about the place, and I, as I stood alone, with all the sunlight fading out about me, felt unconsciously the same gloom and depression creeping up and steeping all my senses in its lethargy.

The door opened ; I started forward, Mrs. Arden met me. Here at least was a reality ; she had not changed. I went up to her hurriedly.

"Dear Mrs. Arden," I cried, "I am come home. But what does all this mean ? Where is Alice ?"

Then I looked at her, and behold, she too wore the same subtle change in face and figure ; no light of pleasure gladdened her eyes, or caused her lips to smile in welcome to me. Her pretty brown hair was all streaked with grey, her face was pale, her manner dejected.

"I am glad you have come, Basil," she said. "Not that I think you can do much good, but it's pleasant to see you again. Alice is resting, but I daresay she will see you."

"Daresay she will see me !" I echoed. "Why, of course she will. I have come home to marry her !"

"Ah, Basil ! I doubt if Alice even remembers you or her promise now."

"What do you mean ?" I cried. "Alice not remember me ! Is she ill ? Has she lost her reason ? For pity's sake tell me the meaning of all this !"

"Poor Basil," she murmured pityingly ; "of course you cannot know. No, she is not ill, Basil ; not really ill, but she is so changed, and we do not know why. She walks about as one in a dream ; she will sit for hours without moving, not answering even when spoken to, taking no interest in any person or thing about her."

"How long has this been ?" I asked.

"Six months now ; we noticed it first on her return from Europe."

Yes, I remembered ; the one letter I had from her during the past six months was sad and depressed.

"Hush ! I hear her coming," said Mrs. Arden, holding up a warning finger.

The door was pushed slowly open, and Alice came into the room. My heart leapt up at sight of her. Would not my love's heart speak out on seeing me ?

She came towards us slowly, her dark draperies making no noise as she walked, her hands crossed lightly before her. I noticed how transparent they looked against her dress. Her beautiful golden hair was drawn from her forehead, and twisted into one great coil on her head ; her always white skin was now perfectly colourless, while her blue eyes had a strained, tired look in them, as of one who had neither rested nor slept for many nights.

She looked at us very calmly, and then passed on in her noiseless walk to the window looking south, pulled back the curtain, and stood

gazing out. The last faint glimmer of sun came in and rested lovingly on her golden head.

"Alice!" I said, going up to her, "do you not know me? I am Basil."

"Basil!" she answered, turning her distant blue eyes upon me. "Are you cousin Basil? I am glad to see you. You have been away a very long time, dear Basil, and sometimes I have wanted you." Then she put out her hand; I took it in mine.

"Surely you must know, my darling, why I have come home. Do not you remember two years ago how you promised to be my wife? I have come back to claim you, Alice."

A slight shade, a shadow of sorrow, passed over her sweet face.

"Poor Basil," she said, "not to know that I cannot be anyone's wife."

I drew back quickly, dropping her hand; she did not seem to heed me, but stood looking out upon the gathering gloom, seemingly unconscious of the shock her words had caused.

"What does she mean?" I asked, hurriedly turning to Mrs. Arden. She only shook her head in reply, and her eyes were full of tears.

Later in the evening, as I sat with the judge over the glowing wood fire, he told me how, since Alice's return from abroad, this horrible change had grown upon her. It came by degrees. At first she was bright and happy, though always reticent in regard to her journey or what she had seen. After a few weeks she grew restless and moody, then again unnaturally gay. At one time she fancied having the old library made into her bedroom; the judge, only too glad to gratify her, consented. This accounted for the change that had so surprised me. One by one she gave up her daily duties, neglected her flowers and dogs, shunned her poor people, went nowhere, gave up all society, and denied herself to anyone that might call. She would sit for hours with clasped hands, gazing out over the fields and trees, to where, some miles away, the ocean washed the coast; but neither question nor reproach could rouse her from her reverie.

"Have you had no advice?" I asked. "Surely something can be done. Take her away, give her change of scene; her life is too dull here!"

"Alas! my dear Basil, all that has been tried, but to no avail. We have had the best medical advice from Boston; even the great brain authority, Dr. H., of New York, has seen her; but they can none of them help her. We have taken her away, but change only aggravates the trouble. The doctors all agree that she is suffering from some mental malady, yet none of them, with all their wisdom, can reach it. Our poor Alice is dying before our very eyes, and neither love nor skill can prevent it."

My poor girl! how hard it seemed, that upon her for whom there seemed so much in life, should come this awful blight.

The next day she sent for me to come to her room. She was sitting by the window when I entered, and I noticed casually as I passed that the farther window, which opened upon a covered verandah or outside passage, was closed and protected by heavy inside shutters. The sunlight lay across the floor in a broad straight band; in its midst was Alice, her hands folded listlessly upon her lap. I went to her, and taking one little hand into mine, said—

“You sent for me, Alice; do you want me?”

“Did I send for you, Basil? No, I don’t think I want anything. Perhaps, though, you can tell me something that will amuse me. Where have you been, that you stayed away so long?”

Her sweet, tired eyes looked up at me appealingly, and I, conquering as best I could the horror that was creeping over me, told her of my life in San Domingo. For a few moments she listened eagerly, with somewhat of her old look of interest; but this soon faded, and I saw that I was talking to deaf ears. I released her hand.

“You are tired, Alice: some other time we will talk again.”

She smiled vaguely for answer. I left her, more perplexed and sad at heart than ever. The days passed on, I could see no change for the better in Alice. Her time was passed in listless idleness; even the slight interest my coming had roused in her was soon over, and all my attempts to rouse her were fruitless. After a few weeks, I, too, ceased to try, and found myself accepting the position of affairs as inevitable, and growing as subdued and dejected as those about me.

One evening, or rather night, for it was close upon one o’clock, I sat by the library fire reading; gradually the book lost interest for me, and I fell asleep, to be awakened immediately by a slight noise at the door. I turned my head—there, to my surprise, I saw Alice. She was standing by the south window, clad in a long, soft, white robe; her beautiful hair, unbound, fell upon her shoulders and to her waist, in straight, heavy masses.

“Alice!” I exclaimed, starting up, “what are you doing here?”

She did not answer me, and though she turned her head and gazed at me, her eyes wore no look of recognition. She stood for a few moments, her eyes fixed on the darkness without, holding back with her pale hand the heavy draperies that covered the window. Then, with a little murmuring sigh, she dropped them, and walked slowly and hesitatingly towards the door. I rose and followed her as silently as possible. She crossed the hall to the door of the old library, now her bedroom; this she pushed open noiselessly, and I cautiously stepped behind her into the room. The curtains were closely drawn over the window in which she had sat the morning after my arrival, while, to my exceeding surprise, the heavy wooden shutters that guarded the other were thrown back, and through an opening in the covered passage the moonlight, faint and pale, shone in. Still gliding on before me, she passed down the passage to a

small door half hidden by a heavy ivy vine. As she neared this, she turned abruptly, and looked about her with pale, vacant eye. Then taking from her girdle a key, she fitted it into the lock, opened the door, and entered.

The room was large, one half being portioned off by a heavy damask curtain. Alice pushed this aside, and we stepped into a flood of silvery light. The large window opposite us was bare of blind or shade; through this the moonlight streamed in gorgeous splendour. At first, my eyes, accustomed to the obscurity of the long corridors, were dazzled by this sudden flood of light, and I could distinguish nothing; but, by degrees, I found myself noting the peculiar appearance of the room.

The walls were roughly finished in plaster, and ungraced by picture or ornament, but hanging over them in great profusion were vines of every description, from the wild clematis, with its feathery bud and blossom, to the pale green smilax, whose tender leaves gained a new freshness in the moonlight. Flowers blossomed everywhere, the warm air was heavy with their perfume. How all these retained their life and colouring in the rough early winter that had set in, was a mystery to me, and Alice's secret.

At the farther end of the apartment, near the window, was a raised dais covered with a crimson rug. Upon this was set up an easel. The picture that rested upon it was hidden from sight by a curtain of crimson silk; a low artist's chair and table, set with brushes and palette, stood near. Alice crossed the room quickly, took up the palette and brushes, and throwing back the curtain, began to work with eager haste. At first my astonishment was so great I could not move, for I knew that never in her life had Alice held pencil or brush; indeed, her total lack of artistic taste or interest had been a matter of much discussion between us. Yet now she handled both as if certain of her own power, and as of one long accustomed to the work.

I approached noiselessly until I stood where I could look upon her picture. It was not a large one: a square of perhaps twenty inches, a pale grey background, upon which a bunch of damask roses were coming to life beneath her hand. The work was marvelously done. Each petal lay back soft and creamy, the green leaves curling around them tenderly; yet something about them startled and shocked me. What it was I could not say, yet, each time I looked, the feeling of repugnance waxed stronger. Suddenly it came to me. In the heart of each rose lurked a human face, not sufficiently defined to be at once visible, but growing upon you by degrees with a fascination awful in its grotesqueness. And it was always the same face, and always the face of a man, repeated over and over, sometimes but a shadow, often nothing but a faint outline. You could no more doubt its existence than you could that to-morrow's sun would chase away the gloom of night. Alice painted on, silently and

swiftly. She gave no sign of life save the quick moving to and fro of her hand, and the coming and going of her uneven breath.

The moonlight flooding the room lighted up as strange a picture as was ever seen. The pale girl in her white drapery, over which strayed the unloosed braids of her golden hair, working with feverish energy upon her weird, unearthly roses; the vine-hung walls shimmering in the silver light; and I, the one conscious watcher.

Hour after hour must have passed; already the moonlight was paling and fading. Alice was at work upon her last flower; she bent eagerly forward in the imperfect light, a slight smile parted her lips; the last rose was completed, and from it too looked the same shadowy face the other roses held. She drew back for a moment, then hastily, as if in triumph, signed her work. I, following with my eyes the letters as she formed them, read, not her own familiar signature in slight pointed letters, but the bold characters of a man's hand forming the name, "Carlo Berdisi."

As she traced the last letter, the moon disappeared completely; only the cool light of the coming dawn filled the room. With a sigh either of fatigue or content, Alice rose from her seat, drew the curtain over the picture, and, as silently as she had entered, left the room, locking the door carefully, and shutting and barring the window that gave access to the corridor.

Not until I reached the library and saw the dead fire, and the grey morning shadows creeping out of the corners, did I realise in how strange a scene I had taken part. Alice's presence and occupation had so absorbed me I had taken no heed of the flight of time. The next morning I sought her in her room. She was sitting in her usual place in the window, full in the light of the sun. She smiled a quiet welcome as I drew my chair to hers and took her hand, scanning unconsciously her fingers for some trace of the night's work; but her little hands were white and flawless as they rested indolently on her dark gown.

"Alice, dear," I said, "you have never told me about your winter in Italy. Was it all you pictured it, or did it disappoint you?"

I fancied her hand closed more quickly on mine, but her answer, so quietly indifferent, belied the idea.

"Oh, yes, Basil, I liked it. You know I never was much given to dreams, so I could not very well be disappointed."

"And did you visit all those wonderful art galleries? How much there is there to call forth one's love of such things."

"No doubt, Basil, dear, to anyone but me; but you know very well I have no taste for such matters. Why, I don't even know one colour from another, and am ignorant of the most commonly familiar names of artists and pictures."

Yet I had seen her, only a few hours before, bending breathlessly over her canvas, and working with the ardour of one sure of success.

"Alice!" I said, suddenly, "to where does that window lead, and why is it closed in that way?"

"Why, Basil," she answered, "you must remember: it opens to the old outside corridor where we used to play, but it has been barred and locked a long time now. Uncle Arden thought the room unsafe without this protection."

"And is it never opened, Alice? neither night nor day?"

"No," she said, quietly, "never that I know of."

Yet I had seen her, but a few hours back, pass in and out of the window, and with her own hands close and bar the shutters! Was she mad, or was I?

The days grew into weeks, but brought no change in Alice. I had tried several times, but always unsuccessfully, to find her again at her night work; she had either abandoned it, or else I was unfortunate in my efforts.

As the weeks lengthened into months, I began to hope that Alice was returning to her natural state. At times she seemed more her old self, walked and rode with me, and once even, as we stood in the fast-gathering twilight of a December day, she put her hand caressingly to my shoulder, saying in her own old sweet voice:

"Dear Basil, you will not tire of me, surely?"

For answer I folded her in my arms, and she lay so for a time seemingly content.

But, alas! as the spring days came on with their promise of an early summer, Alice sank back into a worse phase of her strange malady; she was restless and moody, impatient in her answers, and growing even angry over trifles.

One night in April—I remember the date, the fifteenth—I was sitting alone in the library, smoking my last cigar; the clock had already struck midnight, and I was preparing to go to my room, when I heard the same stealthy opening of the door that had disturbed me there months before. It was Alice who entered; Alice, in the same trailing white gown, with her golden hair hanging about her. She went through the same pantomime, drawing back the curtain of the south window, while she gazed out silently. As she let it fall she murmured softly:

"Very soon, Maestro mio; it is nearly finished now!"

I followed her as before. She led me through the long passage to the ivy-covered door. When we came within the strange studio, I felt a change; the vines hung withered on the walls, only a few flowers were grouped in one large bowl, and they already showed the hand of death upon them.

The painting upon her easel was covered with the same crimson curtain; Alice threw it back impatiently, and at once set to work. I stole behind her, but started back on seeing what her brain and fingers were producing. This too was a small-sized canvas, with the same softly-tinted background; from it looked the head and face of

a man, regular in outline, glorious in beauty, the completion of the shadowed faces that the roses half revealed.

From the fine olive brow the hair swept back in dead, lustreless black; the straight Grecian nose was a model; the rounded, full-coloured lips might have belonged to Paolo when he wooed Francesca; and the eyes, "large, asking eyes," of deepest brown, were those of entreaty and command combined.

Whose was this face? What man could have come into this quiet life, with his foreign beauty, and so imbue her with himself, that her very nature and attributes became changed beneath his influence? Where had she met him? Was he a reality, or was he but a figment of an overstrung, imaginative brain?

A thousand like questions crowded my mind as I watched Alice's quickly-moving fingers. To me it seemed she held the brush tenderly, lingering lovingly over the smallest detail. To my eyes the picture was already finished; not so to hers. She worked on until daylight was growing visible in the east, even then putting down her brush with a sigh. She held her head upon her hand, gazing lovingly at the beautiful face. Even to me it seemed the pictured eyes gave back the glance, the pictured mouth moved in some soft, southern love word.

Suddenly she stooped and laid her lips against his. Did they return the sweet pressure, that the crimson should so flood cheek and brow, and lose itself in the golden locks above?

"To-morrow," she murmured; "addio, addio!"

That night I spent in thinking how best to unravel this mystery, and I decided that the next day I would tell Alice of my following her, and accuse her of keeping a secret from me.

But to-morrow brought us word that Alice was not well enough to leave her room. She grew rapidly worse; in three days her life was despaired of, and we waited with intense longing for one ray of consciousness to be given her before she passed into "the silent land."

She lay upon her bed, her blue eyes widely open, yet seeing nothing about her, her golden hair flung out upon the white bed covering, and all the time a sweet, happy smile upon her lips, but a smile that had naught to do with me, and in which we held no part.

In vain I called her by all endearing names; her eyes never turned towards me, her lips never responded.

It was a week from the time when I had last followed Alice to her studio. That night I shared the watch with the nurse; there was nothing really to do, so I let the woman lie down, promising to call her if any change came.

The night wore on, hour after hour, but Alice never moved or spoke; her breath came fitfully through her parted lips, her eyes gazed out unseeingly. I watched her as she lay there, and all the old memories rushed quick and fast upon me, crushing out the

dreadful present, giving me back my love, as she had stood that autumn day holding between her eyes and the sunlight the branch of pink-flecked maple leaves. I buried my face in my hands, and the grief that was pressing so sorely on my heart had its way for a time. When I raised my head the room was full of the soft grey light of dawn; surprised at the flight of time, I looked at Alice and started at once to my feet.

She was sitting straight in the bed, her hair swept back from her forehead, an exalted, entranced expression on her face. I sprang towards her.

"Alice! Alice!" I cried, "do you know me? I am Basil, your Basil. Oh, my darling, for mercy's sake give me one word!"

Useless, worse than useless pleading; she neither heard nor heeded.

Suddenly the sun rose, flooding the room with warm, rosy light.

With one wild, glad cry, one long-drawn call of "Carlo!" Alice threw out her hands towards the glowing east; for one moment the sun, streaming over her face, brought back the crimson flush to her cheek and brow; then she fell back upon the pillows, a heavy, breathless weight.

My cry of agony brought the family to her bedside; they found me on my knees beside her, holding her fair head upon my breast, and pressing passionate kisses upon her smiling, silent lips.

"Is she dead?" I asked beseechingly.

"Alas! yes, dear Basil."

But I would not believe it, not that day nor the night which followed, although my poor darling lay so white and still, and showed no sign of life. Yet I could not think her dead.

They robed her for her burial, and laid her on her couch with flowers all about her. Still to me she was not dead, and I pleaded so hard, I entreated so violently, they dared not take her from me and put her in the cold, dark earth. Two days passed so; on the third night I determined to visit her studio, where last I had watched her busy hands.

Remembering how she used to draw me after her, I rose and tried to fancy that she led the way. Through her now silent chamber I went, unbarring the heavy shutters her delicate fingers had last closed. The long corridor was full of April moonlight as I walked down it, and Alice really seemed to flit before me in her flowing robe.

I pushed open the ivy-covered door, and found myself within her temple. Everything was as she had left it, only the dust lay upon all things like a heavy grey pall. The vines were but skeletons, the flowers in the bowl crumbled at a touch, the brightness of the crimson curtain that hid from sight her work was dimmed by the same grey shade: her brushes and palette lay as she had put them down, the colour stiffened on them, her chair pushed back, a tiny cambric handkerchief on the floor as she had dropped it.

All spoke of her, yet she was dead ! I raised the silken curtain reverently ; there shone forth in the moonlight the same dark, beautiful face over which my Alice had hung in loving work. To my eyes the full crimson lips, to which she had pressed her innocent ones, curled in a smile of triumph, while the eyes had lost all look save that of command.

I dropped the curtain ; my rival flaunted his victory too openly before my face.

On Alice's artist table I found a small flat book. I opened it ; the parting leaves gave back to me a dry, sweet odour, as of pages long closed upon a flower pressed in its first freshness. I turned the leaf ; a bunch of pale purple anemone, still bright in colour, greeted my eyes. Beneath, in Alice's writing, I read :

"La Campagna, Roma. To-day, for the first time, I have seen my master. From his hand I had these flowers."

Still further on :

"Carlo Berdisi—my fate ! Why should I so struggle against destiny?"

Then, under a date of a month later, a printed notice cut from an Italian paper, giving a short account of the success achieved by Carlo Berdisi in gaining the prize given by the Academy for the best modern painting ; adding a comment on his being a promising young painter in the Roman world, high up in court favour, and of rising reputation. Beneath, in Alice's writing :

"Thou hast triumphed ! Alas, for me it is indeed addio !"

There was but one more entry, and that of but a week gone by ; in fact, dated on that very fifteenth of April when I had last seen Alice at her work.

"Nearly a year since Carlo left me. My work, too, is nearly finished. Oh, my master, I have suffered ! be appeased. It is your spirit that has worked through the poor instrument of my feeble body. I leave your beautiful face, over which I have poured out my life, as a future glory to you, Carlo ! Maestro mio, come to me : am I not worthy ?"

Here the writing ceased ; and, with this cry in her heart, Alice had waited for her summons. I glanced back to the printed paper, and noticed more carefully the date, the 22nd of April, 1860 ; then I remembered it was the 22nd of April, 1861, that Alice had gone from me. One year exactly to the very date between the two events. Was not her prayer answered ? Had not his spirit come to her ? If not, why that rapt look of happiness, that smile of content that lighted her face for the week before she died ? Why, above all, that glad, triumphant cry of "Carlo," that died on the air with her last breath ?

Tenderly I laid down the book ; it was as though my darling's heart had been opened before me.

As I retraced my steps, my heart full of Alice's double life, there

came to my memory how once, while in San Domingo, I had read with great interest how a certain Dr. d'Aumal had restored a young woman from what seemed to all about her death. Alice had apparently been dead three days, and yet, save that there was no pulse, no heart-throb, no breath, she lay as one asleep; all that is most painful in death was not with her. Could it be possible that what seemed death to us might, after all, be but a deep, breathless sleep?

In a fever of excitement I flew to the judge and Mrs. Arden, and begged them to send for this Dr. d'Aumal. Mrs. Arden shook her head. Alice was dead; she knew it; why strive to think otherwise? God knew best. Then she buried her head to hide her tears.

The judge thought otherwise.

"How can I find this man, Basil?"

Luckily I had kept the paper; a few moments' search brought it to light.

"Dr. Henri d'Aumal," I read. "No. 100, Madison Avenue, New York."

In less than an hour a telegram of great urgency had been sent; by midnight we had the answer:

"Will be with you to-morrow afternoon.—H. d'A."

The next day I passed in Alice's room, by Alice's side, and on my knees I cried to God to spare her life, and send to me any other sorrow He might choose.

Do you think such prayers are not heard and answered?

By four o'clock the noise of carriage-wheels on the drive told me the doctor had arrived. In a few moments the judge entered, ushering before him a small, dark man, with a large head, clear black eyes, and a finely-chiselled mouth. He crossed the room quickly, bowing to me as he approached.

"Is this the young lady?" he asked in a well-bred voice, which, in spite of his strong foreign accent, inspired confidence at once.

He took Alice's hand in his, bending the slight fingers backward and forward with tender care, raised the lids of her eyes, put his ear to her heart, all in a slow, impassive manner almost aggravating to witness. Suddenly, as he passed his hand over her golden hair and pale brow, an expression of triumph came over his face. He turned and spoke in a more nervous tone.

"There is one chance in ten thousand, one experiment alone that can save—or kill. Will you have it?"

We answered "Yes."

"Will you ask my nephew to attend me? He has my case with him."

The judge went to fetch him. Meantime the doctor gave me my instructions.

"You will sit one side of Miss Arden, my nephew the other. You will each hold one of her hands, and you will tell me immediately if you feel ever so slight a pulse-throb. What I shall do no

other doctor in this country has done—I but once before. I shall take my scalpel and slightly raise the skin here,” laying his hand on Alice’s left temple; “if, when I prick the artery, the blood comes out red, she lives, provided we can stop the bleeding and give her sufficient nourishment. Do you understand?”

I answered “Yes.”

We then drew her couch close to the window, and I took my station, with my fingers on Alice’s right hand. At that moment the judge entered, followed by the doctor’s nephew. I rose to meet him, when, as the light struck full on his face—was I awake or dreaming, mad or sane? surely this was Alice’s picture-face—this was Carlo Berdisi!

Before I had time to speak, he caught sight of Alice and started back.

“Is it possible?” he cried out. “Oh, anima mia, is it thus I find thee!”

He would have thrown himself on the bed beside her but for the doctor’s peremptory resistance. Then followed a word or two between them in Italian, and then he took his place the other side of Alice, and we waited for the doctor’s signal.

Think what a situation.

On one side the man who loved unsuccessfully; on the other, the man who loved and was loved. Between us, one fair girl, the arbitrator of our lives!

Very skilfully Dr. d’Aumal set about his work. With fingers almost as tender as mine, he inserted the shining steel blade of the little scalpel, slightly raised the thin skin from her temple, and, scarcely breathing, prepared to probe the vein. It was a moment of intense excitement; the sun flooded the room, and lay in wasteful splendour upon the perfectly motionless figure, over which hung, in breathless suspense, three eager men.

My finger rested on her slight wrist, my every nerve was strained to its utmost to feel the first faint throb of life, while still with jealous eyes I watched my rival on the other side, lest he should be the first to say,

“She lives!”

A moment—then, in answer to the sharp point of the knife, two drops of bright red blood ran out and trickled down her cheek. Even as they started I held up my finger to the doctor; he took her hand in his, touched her pulse, smiled, then turning quickly, began to stop the blood that now flowed freely, while at the same time I poured some brandy into her partially-opened mouth.

Gradually the features relaxed, the eyelids fluttered slightly, a few beads of moisture started on her brow; she smiled, turned her head wearily, and then fell into a deep sleep.

“That is well,” cried the doctor; “now she will live. In a few hours she will wake, and, save for a little languor, she will be none the worse for her dream of death.”

I laid my hand upon the young Italian's shoulder, and motioned him out of the room.

As we stood in the long passage, now half-full of shadows, I said: "You are Carlo Berdisi?"

"I am—and you?"

"Basil Grey, Miss Arden's cousin and affianced husband. Will you tell me where you knew her?"

Then, with his handsome face full before me, and in his wooing southern voice, he explained how in Rome he had met her, been attracted by her calm, shy beauty, noticed her seeming indifference to all art, tried to initiate her into its beauties, until he found himself growing more and more fond of the pure New England girl; and as he noticed the singular power he began to possess over her, he used it to rouse an equal passion in her heart. He told her of his love one day as he gave her some wild flower—the pressed anemone in her journal; she, while answering with her eyes, drew back, and kept him from her by her gentle pride. There was something about her he could never overcome. Was it, I dared ask myself, my love that wrapped her about and protected her?

And so one day, when failing to awaken any more absolute response to his pleadings than the half-frightened, half-longing look in her eyes, he left her, saying bitterly,

"I can love you no longer. You are cold, you are proud, but my spirit shall so possess you, that what you do shall not be of yourself but of me. Until you can suffer through art, as an artist does, you are not worthy of my love!"

Then he had kissed passionately the folds of her dress, and she had cried out as he left her, "Carlo! Carlo!" But he would not listen, and soon he heard she had gone to her far-away home.

Only a week ago he had come to join his uncle, to aid him in his scientific researches.

As he concluded, the sun shot out suddenly a last flash of crimson that lit up into glory his wonderfully beautiful face.

Ah, what chance had I against beauty and fervour such as his?

Then I spoke.

"Mr. Berdisi, it would seem one of us is to do the other a sad injury, and yet unwittingly. We both love the same woman. I am generous, but not enough so to withdraw entirely in your favour. Let it be thus: we will both watch by her bedside until her waking; to whichever one she turns, to him shall be the victory."

We entered Alice's room together; she still slept; the curtains had been drawn, and the candles lighted. We took our places, one on either side her couch, where her first conscious glance would rest upon us.

The hours crept on. Dr. d'Aumal and the judge passed in and out, and still she slept. The grey dawn once more crept out from the folds of night, little by little the east reddened; Alice stirred

slightly, she sighed, moved her head upon the pillow, sighed again, opened her eyes and gazed vaguely about her.

Slowly, very slowly, her face betokened returning consciousness; her eyes, from wandering about the room, came back to us; she glanced first at Carlo, then at me, then back again to him; my heart stood still; then once more her blue eyes turned towards me, she smiled, put out her little hand, and in her own sweet voice of two years ago, said—

“Basil, am I ill? What are you doing here, my darling?”

Even as she asked the question she fell once more into a sound, refreshing sleep. And so was my prayer answered.

And now, perhaps, comes the strangest feature of this strange malady.

After Alice's recovery she retained no memory of anything that had happened to her in the last year. When I spoke to her of her art, she looked at me in wonderment. When I showed her her studio, her paintings, and her journal, she was completely astounded and incredulous. She did not even recall the name of Carlo Berdisi, and looked with perfect indifference upon his picture face; and though I endeavoured in every way to catch some indication of a returning memory, I was always unsuccessful.

She was perfectly well and strong, loved me devotedly, but all her recollections dated back two years, and no effort of mine could recall to her mind any of her foreign experience.

Dr. d'Aumal, to whom I told the entire story, said: “To you this seems a very great mystery; to me it is written in letters of gold, that ‘he who runs may read.’ My nephew, Carlo, simply dominated her through his superior will, and through his art. What she loved in him was, not himself, but his work. She has an extremely nervous temperament, highly strung and imaginative, and she met some one like her in nature, only stronger, who appealed to her unborn artistic faculties, and over these he swayed his sceptre. Her love for him, and her love for you, were two utterly different emotions, though bearing the same name; yet see how in returning health she turned towards you, and her art love had died, never to be even remembered or regretted.

“Such is the triumph of grosser emotions over the purely æsthetic.

“Marry her, my dear boy; she will be everything to you; and my poor Carlo has returned to Rome, a wiser if a sadder man.”

This was the doctor's explanation, and as I could give no better one, I accepted it, and took his advice.

Nowhere is to be found to-day, I think, a happier home than ours, well hidden among the New Hampshire hills, or a more blooming wife and children than meet me on my return from work at evening.

A. DE G. S.

UNDER THE STARS.

UNDER the stars. A silvery fountain springing
 From the hot sand, beside a stately palm,
 With its cool touch to the parched pilgrim bringing
 Visions of home, amid the desert calm;
 Of summer boughs, their tender shadows throwing
 O'er broad-leaved sedge and lilies passion pale,
 Where over mossy stones and pebbles flowing,
 Ripples a brooklet down a grassy vale.

Under the stars, glad childhood's rosy dreaming
 In quiet hamlets set in moorlands brown,
 Under the stars, the ruddy watch-fires gleaming
 Around the walls of some beleaguered town;
 And on the plain, warrior and war-steed dying
 Amid the bloodstained flowers and trampled corn,
 With broken shield, and lance all shivered lying,
 Where stood a mailed host at dewy morn.

Under the stars, a lonely vessel drifting
 On rocky shores, borne by the restless foam,
 And far away, soft winds of twilight lifting
 The casement leaves of some sweet woodland home.
 Murmur, O winds, while the cold moonbeams glisten
 Upon a coral reef, a stormy sea,
 Your dirge for one who nevermore will listen
 To your low whispers through the household tree.

Under the stars, far in the ages hoary,
 That with their mists our busy world enfold,
 Sybil and sage have striven to read the story
 Inscribed in their bright characters of gold.
 But faith, with clearer eyes their truths divining,
 Sees far above life's rainbow gleams and showers,
 E'en as the stars in God's own kingdom shining,
 Her treasures hid beneath the churchyard flowers.

J. I. L.



MR. ELLEN EDWARDS.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

A NEW APPOINTMENT.

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A NEW APPOINTMENT.

OSTEND, after a few days of tremendous heat, had just been relieved by a thunderstorm and a deluge of rain. The numerous visitors by whom all the lodgings were taken at a price proportioned to the market value of salt water and sea-breezes, were consoling themselves for being confined to their expensive apartments by the new sensation of breathing freely. When the heavy showers ceased, the ground would speedily dry, and the band and the promenade would be all the more enjoyed that lately there had been enjoyment in nothing. To invalids the relief from the oppressive temperature was no doubt indescribable; but we must confine our attention to one of them, and that one was hardly to be included among the visitors at all. Certainly, had it been necessary to pay the high price they did for the beneficent sea-breeze, Miss Joseph would not have been there to breathe it.

It came on its errand of mercy, however, as readily as if purchased with the gold so largely disbursed elsewhere; and swept over the museum of Dr. Thaddeus with a sublime indifference to the miscellaneous nature of its contents. It must be owned that some of these were rather trying to the senses of an invalid, such as Miss Joseph had been for several weary weeks, her illness dating from the arrival of Archdeacon Burleigh, and their visit to Cosmo Dangerfield's house. From that evening she had become aware of growing indisposition and failing strength; and as she refused to take nature's warnings, and went on just as usual, the result had been utter prostration.

Her exertions on behalf of her deceased friend, Mrs. Dangerfield—her grief for her loss—her trouble of mind respecting the missing bequest—added to the irregular meals and perpetual vigils of her periods of watching, might, in themselves, have accounted for the general break-down; but Miss Joseph had her own opinion on the subject, from which no reasoning could turn her. It was all nonsense to think she had hurt herself by what she did; she had done harder things in her lifetime without being ill—she could do them again; but the mischief was done when she took that woman, Justine's, poison. Yes, poison—there was no other word for stuff that took your senses away, and hung about you ever after, even if you did not find it out at the time. It was hanging about her now, she was sure of it, and she tasted it everywhere—in her food, in her medicine—even in the water, at times. And whether it were imagination or reality, the idea was so strong that she actually suffered as if it were true; losing flesh and appetite, and often feeling pain. An English doctor came to see her, but gave her up, because, as he said, their methods of treatment did not agree, and she would only follow her own. So Dr. Thaddeus, very much against his will, had to take her in hand himself.

He humoured her theory, and with such good effect, that she began by degrees to amend, and at the time we are speaking of was sufficiently convalescent to be sitting at her window at the top of the museum, letting the healing breath of the sea play about her temples. A letter from Adela Granard, received a few days before, lay in her lap, to be taken up every now and then, and mused over. The description of hill and valley, lake and spring, brought a quiet sense of pleasure into the worn face; and the smile was still on her lips, after the last perusal, when the heavy tread of her host was heard coming along the passage, and a smart tap at the door asked leave to enter.

"Come!" he said, as he closed the door behind him, "you Englishwomen are happy when you can get the window open, and let in the rheumatism, so I need not ask how you are to-day."

"I am better, doctor," said the invalid. "At least, I think I must be, when I feel a longing to be walking on soft turf, and looking at the water-lilies in Rydal Lake with poor little Emily. I'll shut the window if you are afraid of air."

"Afraid? I do not know the word, or I should, as the Archdeacon expressed it, have been a subject for the museum long ago. Let me feel the pulse. So! We want to be on the green turf after the lilies, do we? Well—why not?"

"Simply because we are here, and not there, doctor."

"Simply because we choose to be here, when we had much better be there, my dear lady. You have stayed at Ostend since your poor friend's death—why?"

"You know well enough, Dr. Thaddeus, that I want to clear up the mystery of the missing papers. I have lost so much time now

that I have little hope, but I cannot give it up without another struggle."

"Struggle as hard as you like, only don't waste your energies in the wrong place. Much has happened since you have been up here. First, the Professor—pah! such presumption!—let his house, took all his furniture away, and set up in London on a fine scale—theatre, apparatus, all complete—and has made a good start as a necromancer of the nineteenth century. His thousand pounds, if he has got them yet, will not carry him very far on that road; but he is supported by a firm I know well, and they lend him one of their houses, and advance him money, and keep an eye on all his doings. I told you some time ago he was always watched, and he is so still."

"Then do you belong to the firm you mention?" asked Miss Joseph, rather bewildered by this statement.

"Rather say they belong to me. We are all of one stock, one house; those young men look up to me, though I do not mix in their trade. Again, secondly: the boy Paul has been performing with great success at the séances, and is now gone down to the Lakes, by his master's desire; for change of air."

"To the Lakes? What, to Grasmere, where they are?"

"The very place; two of my kinsmen's servants went down with him—they have to sell a horse there and the boy rides it."

"What made the Professor send him there?—do you know?"

"Of course I know, or I should not trouble my head or yours about it. He is gone as a spy on the doctor, Mowatt, and here comes my third point. The doctor is said to keep some secret from his principal, only telling him as much of it as he chooses, and Paul is to get it from him, and secure it for his master. A pretty little game for us to look on at, hein?"

And taking off his glasses, he began to polish them vigorously, looking at her through his thick eyelashes the while. Miss Joseph, pondering what he said, was going through some mental calculation.

"I think I can manage it," spoke she. "I have a humble friend in London who will give me a bed for a night, and I can go down the next day. Dear Adela has asked me often enough to join them; she will make me welcome."

"Very likely; but if you go, you must obey your doctor, and I shall have to write out a regimen for you, as well as mark your route. We will talk it over this evening—if you will come down and take a cup of coffee with me."

"She is twice the woman she was since I proposed this," he thought, as he descended. "It was just the stimulus required by the system, and if it does nothing else, it may save her brain."

She came down as he had suggested, but the exertion seemed to cost her so much, that he began to doubt her ability to take his prescription. Still, he was convinced that she would never get well without change; and when she put the coffee away from her, with a shudder

of disgust, declaring it had the old taste, like everything else, he said to himself, "I made a mistake; being a woman, she must be set right by contradiction. I have thought it all over again," he said, presently, after his servant had brought in boiling water to make Miss Joseph some tea, "and I do not see why you are to risk your health and your strength by running after rogues and mountebanks, instead of quietly pursuing the study of science with me. Ah, dear lady, the more I compare the different species of the animal creation, the happier I am in my choice. Take my advice—conquer prejudice and womanly weakness, and work in the museum with the modest enthusiasm of a true disciple. It will cure you of all your ills."

"I should think it would; I should be dead in a week. Much obliged, Dr. Thaddeus, but I have told you a dozen times I hate insects and reptiles, and I have no great fancy for sick birds. I mean to go as soon as I can manage it."

He shook his head, but seemed to give way from politeness. Then knowing that her funds were low, and that, left to herself, the journey would necessarily be taken as cheaply as possible, with no margin for comfort in any shape, he devised how to remedy this.

"You are fond of watching ants," he said. "The ants shall be your department. It is a large one, and extends to all climates. Their historians are numerous, of all languages. Here," pulling open a drawer, "on these slips are notes of personal observations by some who died with their work half done, and of others, who only borrowed from books. You will make yourself mistress of the subject, and write a *précis* of the whole, when you come back. And meanwhile, as belonging to the museum, and on my staff, you go to England on my business, and carry it on through my agents—you understand?"

He pushed up his spectacles, and she saw the kind look in his eyes. Her comprehension must have been slow indeed not to understand why he made this proposal, and she expressed a strong scruple about consenting to it. Dr. Thaddeus cut her short.

"Look you now, my dear lady, I will settle that in a few words. Either you or I must go. Perhaps it is my duty, and not yours; likely enough, because I don't want to do it. I am rooted here; my work is all in all to me; I cannot bring myself to leave it. But if you, as my assistant, will follow my directions, and undertake for me what I cannot do for myself, I will undertake in return that the ants shall find you wholesome employment to last you for months to come."

And so, Miss Joseph went to Grasmere.

"I thought of the advice to the sluggard, whose part I had been playing too long," said Miss Joseph, when repeating the above conversation to Adela Granard. "It was all his kindness, of course, but I could not help myself, and have got my department in the

museum, into which I only stipulate that no live things shall be admitted. Thank God, I have no fear of the dead."

She was sitting in Adela's room at Grasmere when she said this, just arrived, and Adela herself was listening; her graceful figure framed, as it were, by the creepers and roses that hung over the window, the background being filled with green heights, in the quiet haze of the summer heat. The sweet scent of fresh flowers, the cool air playing among the leaves, the stillness without, only broken by rural sounds, were indescribably refreshing to tired senses; and Miss Joseph was glad to enjoy them at first, without touching on past trouble or present anxiety. Her noviciate in science had certainly been favourable. The doctor's commendatory letter, following on a telegram he had despatched as soon as the plan was decided, brought friends and welcome directly she reached England. All cares were taken off her hands; everything necessary to comfort was provided; and she was sent northward the next morning, rested and refreshed, without a farthing's expenditure, till she reached Windermere. Nobody would allow her to give even a gratuity; Dr. Thaddeus had said she was travelling on his account, and he would be seriously offended if she was put to any expense.

"I had a very good bedroom, my dear, though it was in a dingy street. I believe they were all Jews, every one of them, by their faces; but they did not say so, and I was better off than with many Christians I've had to deal with. Now tell me about yourself. You are looking lovely, if I may say so without offence, and I know you have a great deal to say that I shall like to hear."

Adela had a great deal to say, but it could not all be said just then; she was momentarily expecting the entrance of Emily, who had been sent out of the way for Miss Joseph's arrival. Sir Marcus was a little anxious as to the effect the unexpected meeting might have on the child's nerves. Adela could not help feeling rather nervous when she heard her voice in the passage.

"Who do you think is come to see us, darling?" she asked, running out, and Emily almost threw down her basket of ferns and wild flowers, to spring into her arms.

"Is it Paul?" said Emily, with a gasp of joy, that showed how much he still dwelt in her thoughts.

"No—an older friend than Paul—a friend who has done more than he could possibly do," said Adela, and drew her into the sitting-room, where Miss Joseph met her with outstretched hands. The poor child, flushed and animated a moment before, shrank and trembled at the sight and touch of one who brought back too vividly the image of the past. But, the first shock over, she gradually regained her colour, and after a while seemed to find a great satisfaction in sitting opposite her old friend, and gazing silently in her face.

They allowed her to do so unnoticed: and during the evening

her mother was gently spoken of as an object, not of pity, but of reverence and affection; her best qualities dwelt upon; her early days described; and an image placed before the daughter's vision on which she might learn to dwell with thankfulness and peace. A cheerful discussion over her last batch of curiosities, and a little bantering of Miss Joseph in her new capacity as student of natural history, brought out a merry laugh from the child: which was well. When Adela carried off her charge to bed, the visitor, stepping out into the garden, became aware that some one was there, listening; and she found herself face to face with the man she had watched for so often in vain at Ostend.

"Well, Mr. Mowatt," she said, coolly, "if I were you I would ring at the bell when I came to call, and not prowl about among the evergreens. I nearly took you for a thief."

The emphasis was not lost upon him. He raised his hat without exhibiting either anger or surprise. "It would have been about as correct if I had taken you for a spy, Miss Joseph," was the retort. "I am come here to see Miss Granard on business."

"Come into the light, sir, that I may see your face," said Miss Joseph: and he stepped into the room. Each noticed an alteration in the other: but not all her illness and anxiety had so changed the worn elderly woman as some unknown agent had altered the medical attendant of Mrs. Dangerfield.

When Mowatt left London, now a few days since, to accept the hands held out to him with friendly intent at Grasmere, it was with a vague, dreamy sense of drifting on a strong current that would carry him he knew not whither. The Professor had boldly declared that it mattered nothing to him whether Mowatt's amendment were real or feigned—indeed, its reality might serve him best in the end. And had Mowatt been set upon his oath with his life hanging on the issue, he could not truly have sworn what he meant, or was, to do in going down to see Sir Marcus and the Archdeacon. When he reached the place he could not resolve to show himself; and he might, after all, have returned as he went, but for witnessing Ernest Archdale's imprudent piece of horsemanship. Certain that he would suffer for it, the surgeon hastened to receive him as he alighted; and Ernest's welcome and gratitude were unbounded. His services were in truth requisite, for the young man was lame again.

Mowatt was received kindly by Sir Marcus and the Archdeacon. Each contrived, without, as it were, planning it, to see him for a few minutes alone—the Archdeacon, that they might shake hands over the grave of the past, and, as he expressed it, forgive each other; the Baronet, that he might give him to understand he fully acquitted him of the intentional maltreatment of the cases brought in evidence against him. He had from the first attributed to error of judgment what others had set down to interested motives; and in their profession experience did so much that by this time such mistakes

had probably become impossible. If so, there were many fields of labour open, and a brother's hand and head were at his service to help him enter them.

Mowatt had been touched by Mr. Burleigh's gentleness—the gentleness of a fiery nature, humbled by self-examination, is always touching; and the rough, impetuous man, of whom many were afraid, felt as if he could kneel where he had been wrong. But Sir Marcus implied nothing of the kind; he made no apology for having been against Mowatt, when all hung on his verdict; he set his misfortunes down to ignorance; and Mowatt found this much harder to bear than a violent accusation. Externally, he showed proper gratitude, without servility, and owned it would be of immense service to him to have so powerful a recommendation; he *had* gained experience in Belgium, where he had seen much of the best foreign surgical practice, and should be glad to turn it to account. But he chafed under the friendly counsel Sir Marcus gave about the use of certain subtle and perilous remedies known to both; and with difficulty kept back the contradictions that rose to his lips.

So far things were friendly in appearance. Mowatt, who had taken up his abode at an inn, was asked to dinner by Sir Marcus. He accepted the invitation, and in the evening was introduced to Miss Granard.

He had heard quite enough of this young lady to give him an interest in the meeting; but nothing that at all prepared him for its effect upon himself. Anyone who had warned him beforehand that he might be too much fascinated by her beauty, would have been treated with derision; Mowatt believed himself case-hardened against any weaknesses of that description. And before the evening was over, he had discovered that his armour was no stronger than so much pasteboard—that he was charmed out of himself—out of his usual habits, his harassing cares, his plots, passions, regrets—all that had predominated till that day. It was like landing after a long, weary voyage, on the shore of a bright, new world, with distant glimpses of rare productions and lovely scenery, and a foreground of sunny verdure and sparkling streams.

He hardly understood himself at first, except that he was strangely happy. Nothing like this had ever entered into his experience. He carried away with him the sound of her voice and the recollection of every word she had said, as one preserves the effect of an exquisite strain of music. Sleeping or waking, that night she was ever present to him.

In the morning, the surgeon went to Mrs. Raymond's lodgings, to see Mr. Archdale. His visit was opportune, for a letter from Mrs. Archdale had caused Ernest and Mrs. Raymond much perplexity, and she wrote of Mr. Cloud in terms which, though guarded, were angry enough to make explanation necessary. The young man frankly told his visitor that his mother was displeased, and he wished

to know the reason. Mowatt explained, with at least an appearance of equal frankness, that he had offended Mrs. Archdale by advising her to avoid Professor Dangerfield. She had consulted him once with Mowatt's help, and her curiosity had been strongly excited; and Dangerfield was just the man to turn such curiosity to his own ends.

"No doubt she has told you of the singular revelation, which has made her so anxious to know more, in hopes of leading ultimately to the recovery of your lost property," concluded Mowatt. "You may remember speaking about it to me, after one of your bad nights; and how you were haunted by some dream connected with your family in times past?"

"I remember it perfectly," replied Ernest: "and your telling me at the time that perhaps some day my happiness might be in your hands: not my money. Are you still of that opinion?"

"I could answer better if I knew in what lay your happiness."

"Is it possible you do not know? I am engaged to Miss Granard, but——"

"To Miss Granard? The lady I saw last night? I thought—I was under the impression that your choice was made—elsewhere."

"You had no reason for it," was Ernest's grave reply.

Mowatt hung his head; the expression of surprise had escaped him unawares, and he recollected himself in time to make the appropriate speech of congratulation. Without waiting to be presented to Mrs. Raymond, he made a hasty retreat to his lodging: where he remained for an hour, studying the papers he had brought locked up in his travelling-bag.

"His happiness in my hands?" he muttered between his teeth. "The words may be sooner verified than I thought."

Ernest Archdale's kindly manners and frank confidence had won Mowatt's regard; and it had been rather a pleasant dream to imagine a change of fortune coming to him through the agency of the poor dispenser. Mowatt had pictured to himself the satisfaction of proving to those who patronised him that he possessed power for good or for evil, according as he might be disposed to exercise it: in Ernest's case he would gladly have used it for good. But now—was it possible that he was so mad, so blind, as to be half stunned by news that ought not to have concerned him, except by sympathy—which could not possibly affect his future life, let him live to what age he might? That a lovely face, seen only for one evening, should have so overthrown his judgment and experience, was hardly to be admitted even in the privacy of his own thoughts. He would not admit it: he was not quite insane; he could admire it as he would a picture, without exposing himself to ridiculous failure by coveting a prize beyond his reach. Meanwhile he would decide what to do with Mrs. Dangerfield's papers, which he had so strangely possessed himself of.

He studied the papers carefully, as well as the notes he had taken

at the time of his attendance upon her, and of such evidence as he had collected during his stay in town. And as he read, a thought came into his mind, which grew more and more vivid the longer he dwelt upon it. Finally he struck his hand on the table, exclaiming, "What a fool I am!"

Something darkened the window for a moment. He looked round—there was nothing there, and yet he could have sworn he had not been mistaken. It was exactly as if a person had been at the window. On examination he found that an outside parapet ran round that floor of the inn, on which a man could stand if he chose. First taking the precaution of locking up his papers, he went downstairs to inquire who was likely to have played such a prank; and found the two dealers in charge of Cairngorm arranging to take up their quarters at that hotel. They were very civil to Mowatt, when he spoke to them about the horse: and he soon found that the report of his having been ridden by the same gentleman who was thrown with the horse at——steeplechase, had been one reason of their move. They wanted to see the gentleman, and to persuade him to mount again; and the whole story, with its different versions, of Ernest's misfortune of the year before, was being discussed among the learned in such matters, with an interest that almost led to disputes. The two officials in the pay of Mr. Lazarus were divided in opinion, and from arguing, took to betting, and the bystanders, from listening, went on to taking sides. It was some time before Mowatt could get his inquiries attended to, as to whether anyone had been on the parapet near his bedroom window. The question, when understood, only led to a laugh, and a warm assurance that no one would risk that who valued his neck. Mowatt was turning his attention again to the Cairngorm controversy, when he was requested in haste to attend a case in the village—an accident requiring immediate care. The resident doctor was out, and Sir Marcus Combermere had told the people that a clever surgeon was at the hotel.

It was the first step towards regaining his position, and Mowatt could not but feel grateful. The case was an anxious one, and required his utmost skill; but after some hours of suspense hope began to revive, and when, late in the evening, he carried a favourable report to the party at Sir Marcus's rooms, his reception was such as he had not met with for many years. To have saved the life and limb of a poor workman was to raise him in the eyes of Adela Granard almost to the dignity of a hero. The brief opportunity of conversing with her, eagerly seized and improved, robbed him of his night's rest. He was haunted by the suggestion of those men—by a vision of Ernest Archdale encouraged to try once more the perilous adventure—and failing this time, so as never to venture again. "No, no!" he found himself exclaiming, as he half rose from his bed, "though he stands in my way, and I must pass him if I can, it shall not be thus—I swear it by all I hope for—by the one hope I thought lost for ever!"

He slept better after this : and had been engaged with his patient all the greater part of the following day, when the Windermere coach stopped within his view. The first passenger that alighted was Miss Joseph.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MILES DARLINGTON.

WE must return to these two visitors, Miss Joseph and Mowatt, the night they met at Miss Granard's, and who were eyeing each other with looks that, if not actually hostile, indicated a readiness to take up arms when necessary. Miss Joseph recollected herself sufficiently to offer him a seat against Miss Granard's return. Emily Stormount had been a little excited by seeing Miss Joseph, and her guardian's watchfulness was never off its guard. Mowatt replied that he had been a personal witness of Miss Granard's vigilant care ; and that, at her express desire, he had been kept out of the young girl's sight.

"But now that she has seen you, Miss Joseph, she may perhaps be equal to seeing me," observed Mowatt. "No one can tell her what I can, poor child."

"No one but yourself knows what you may choose to tell, Mr. Mowatt," was Miss Joseph's retort. "Do you know how I have been looking for you at Ostend—watching every train, till the people thought I was mad—and till I became too ill to go out?"

He bowed his head. "I am aware you were. And the fact was an excellent reason for my keeping away from Ostend."

"You have the face to say so, sir ! And yet to call on a lady like Miss Granard?"

"Certainly. It was in the interests for which Miss Granard is concerned, that I have done both."

"It was in those interests, Mr. Mowatt, that you carried away the deposit which was committed to my charge?"

"Considering the state you were in, Miss Joseph, I do not see what else I could do. But I am not here to dispute with you, or anyone else ; I wish to discharge a duty that has given me a great deal of trouble, and can only do so in Miss Granard's presence. Can I see her this evening—or shall I call again?"

So completely had he turned the tables on Miss Joseph, that in spite of all her previous suspicions and resentment, she began to feel as if she must be in the wrong, when Adela re-entered the room.

"I hope I have not kept you waiting, Mr. Mowatt," she said, as they shook hands, "but my charge had been a little excited, and could not be calmed for sleep. You understand how important sleep is in a case like hers."

Mowatt expressed his sympathy. He could never forget how poor Mrs. Dangerfield had talked of her child, and of her confidence in

the guardian who had been sent her by Providence. "I can now," he added, "better understand what she meant."

"My dear," put in Miss Joseph to Adela, after eyeing him keenly for a few moments, "the time has come for you to learn what it was your poor friend wished you to know. I told you that when I opened the desk, as she had desired, I found nothing. Mr. Mowatt says he took whatever there was, because I was not in a state to do it myself. Whether he had a right to meddle in the matter I cannot say, and it would have saved a great deal of trouble if I had heard from him sooner; but he is now going to explain everything, and if I have done him injustice, I am ready to apologise."

"I require no apology," said Mowatt, gravely; "the matter is too serious, too full of danger to the innocent, for us to waste time and thought about that. That I was justified in acting as I did I am prepared to prove, as well as to show that while no time has been lost, I have accidentally been able to collect evidence which will throw an unexpected light on the whole matter. Did it ever strike you, Miss Granard, that there was anything remarkable in the fact that Mrs. Dangerfield, submissive to her husband's will in every other respect, could hold her own to the last with regard to her fortune?"

"You seem to know more about it than I do," said Adela; "but it *has* so struck me more than once—as well as others. She must have been anxious to save it for her child."

"That would hardly have given her strength to bear what she did, in guarding her capital from Dangerfield's designs upon it. It was not to make her child rich that she struggled so tenaciously; it was to leave a task to others which she had sworn to do, and left undone."

"A task? Of what kind?" asked Adela anxiously, for it was impossible to doubt the seriousness of his manner.

"The hardest of all—RESTITUTION."

There was silence. The ladies looked at each other; Miss Joseph nodded slowly, as one on whom comprehension was dawning.

"That would explain a good deal," she said in a low voice.

"It would, if it were possible to believe it," cried Adela, with generous warmth; "but I remember Mr. Stormount, and the character he bore; and I feel convinced he would never have wronged anybody to make himself rich. The fortune came to him through his father."

"Exactly," said Mowatt; "and from whom did his father inherit?"

"From an old uncle. A hard man, but very skilful in business."

"Mr. Henry Stormount's father was not a rich man before his uncle's death?"

"Certainly not. I have heard my poor friend talk of the hard times her husband had gone through in his boyhood: the debts he had been obliged to contract. I believe these debts he was glad to pay off when he came into the fortune."

"You shall hear all, Miss Granard. I will have no secrets from you ; and I have collected evidence which will materially lessen your difficulties when the time comes to act. Of course, nothing can really be done while Emily is under age."

Adela looked uneasy. "Is there another will in existence that disinherits Emily?"

Mowatt shook his head. "There is nothing to prevent her doing what her father and mother did ; that is, to enjoy the interest of the money, and put the task of restitution on her successor. Should she die under age, the whole falls into the hands of Dangerfield, from whom it has been so carefully kept ; but I wish to impress upon you, for the child's sake, that nothing could be more dangerous than to make him despair. He cherishes the hope that at her majority she will settle something upon him ; at any rate, for his life. This may keep him patient ; if he thought he was to lose everything, then I am afraid to think what he might be tempted to do. Oh, I know you will say we do not live in the middle ages, when such things were done every day. Leave a man to the temptations of extravagance, gambling, and debt, and human nature will break through all nineteenth century hindrances. Ask Miss Joseph if she does not agree with me?"

"I do, indeed," said Miss Joseph with a shudder. "I have the taste of that drug constantly in my mouth. I would not trust the child near Justine for all you could give me."

"Then now you may understand why I interfered to secure the packet, and why I have kept it hidden all this time. This lady was watching for my return, to tax me with the deed, and thus bring the whole affair to light. I had reason to know Mrs. Dangerfield's last moments were watched, and had the papers then fallen into Dangerfield's hands, he would have destroyed them, or used them for his own ends. But, were the facts made public, he would see that his only prospect of profiting by his wife's wealth, would be in Emily's dying before she was twenty-one."

Adela shivered. "You make my blood run cold," said she. "Though I cannot really believe in the danger. A man of his experience surely knows too well the risk he would run—even had he no conscience to keep him back."

"I would trust neither to fears nor to conscience, were I Miss Stormount's guardian ; but you shall judge when you have heard all." He unlocked the courier's pouch slung over his shoulder, and brought out a large pocket-book full of documents of different sizes.

"You must permit me to show you these my own way," he said, taking a place at the table. "Some of them are my own notes."

Whatever Adela thought, she kept to herself. For Emily's sake she prepared to receive such information as he had to give, reserving her opinion as to the means by which he had obtained it.

Perhaps her manner betrayed her, for the colour deepened on his cheek, and he hastened to speak.

"You must understand—Miss Joseph is my witness—that I never forced myself into Mrs. Dangerfield's confidence; on the contrary, she pressed it upon me as a matter of charity and kindness; and her last look, when no one else was near to help her, was one of reliance on my good offices. I did all for her that man could do; I am doing now what she would have wished—let the consequences be what they may."

He seemed bent on being answered; and Adela's reply was given in courteous terms, assuring him that his services to Mrs. Dangerfield would not be forgotten.

"Then I may take the liberty of reading these papers aloud?"

"Certainly. If your reason be a good one."

"My reason is this: Mrs. Dangerfield said to me once, 'She has no idea what she has undertaken; help her, if you can'—meaning you. I would gladly do so, Miss Granard, therefore I am here."

How often, in after years, these words came back to Adela Granard's memory, bringing with them, in the chain of mingled associations, the smell of the flowers on the table—of the ferns Emily had left in a basket—with the sound of the brook that ran below the garden, and the faint distant strain of military music, played by a marching troop of volunteers. None of these were heeded at the moment, yet all lay stamped on her brain by that of which they formed a part.

She only bowed assent to Mowatt's suggestion; and for one moment he allowed himself to gaze into those beautiful eyes, which met his so steadfastly, unconscious that they had wakened the smouldering ashes of his nature into a dangerous heat. For one moment only he tasted the intoxicating pleasure, then returned to business, and began.

"I took down these notes by my patient, Mrs. Dangerfield's, bedside, from the conversations we held as she was able to do so. They are, I think, of importance.

"'When I married my first husband, my dear Henry Stormount, I knew nothing of his affairs, except that his father had lately come into a large fortune, left him by his uncle, Mr. Darlington—an eccentric old man, whom we never met in society. We married with no one's consent but our own, for Mr. Stormount would promise nothing in the way of settlements, and refused to increase Harry's allowance—he was making very little in his profession, and spent twice as much as he had. And so Harry borrowed money on his prospects, and I am afraid he went through a great deal that I knew nothing about. His father died rather suddenly, and then Harry paid off everything, and we lived a pleasant life; only he said to me sometimes, 'Hester, we must retrench and lay by,' and I always agreed, but we never did it.

If he had only told me why, I think I should have tried—I don't know.

“‘When he had his last illness, I saw something was preying on his mind. I tried to make him tell me, but he seemed never to have courage, until near the last. He had often longed to do it, he said, but it seemed so hard upon me, and now he was going to leave me to do alone what we might have done together. The mystery of his father's refusal to allow us anything out of his succession was soon cleared up. It appeared that Mr. Stormount had been all along saving and realising money; it had accumulated at the bankers' to a considerable sum; and an unfinished letter to Harry, interrupted by the seizure which carried him off, explained why. He had strong grounds for considering the property as only a trust for another, and that other was not yet found.’”

Mowatt stopped in his reading, and his eyes again stole across the table. Miss Granard's brow was knitted with close attention, but she only signed to him to continue Mrs. Dangerfield's narrative.

“‘I was terribly upset when I heard this, and I thought he had not done me justice; of course, if it was not ours, we ought not to have spent the money. And I must have been in earnest when I said it, for it comforted my husband immensely. I gave him a solemn promise that I would do my best to clear up the matter, and when sure to whom the money ought to go, I would restore it: I prayed that misery might follow me and my child if I failed in my promise. I did fail—and the misery came.’”

“Poor thing!” said Miss Joseph.

“Is there no more?” asked Adela, as he put the paper aside.

“No more; she turned faint, and was not able to go on afterwards. The explanation must be looked for elsewhere. This,” opening another paper, “is part of the unfinished letter referred to, wrapped round another, which we shall consider presently. It seems that Henry Stormount destroyed the rest of the letter; perhaps his father meant it for no eye but his own.

“‘Now you will see why I have not the means of paying all your debts, Henry, and making you the allowance you ask for. I have never rested, I think, night or day, since I first began to look into the matter, and distinguish between what is honestly mine, and what is not. You will find the accounts all in order, and memoranda of the inquiries I have been setting on foot. I have just been told that I may be taken any minute, and then the rest will devolve upon you.’”

Again Mowatt stopped, and a silence followed.

“We have now,” said Mowatt, “seen thus far into the mystery:

the father handed a trust to the son, which the son delayed to fulfil, and left in the hands of his wife. The wife, as we know, married again, and never seems to have stirred in the matter ; all she did was to preserve the principal from being touched ; her husband having unlimited control over the interest. We come now to the singular narrative, which has influenced the happiness of so many, and may influence many more: the statement found by Mr. Darlington's nephew."

Patter, patter, went the rain upon the leaves, as a bright flash flickered in the window. Miss Joseph, true to her old habits of attending to what was wanted, rose to close it, observing that they were going to have a storm ; but Adela begged her to wait till there was absolute necessity for excluding the air. The heat had become so oppressive that the sound of the rain was refreshing, though as yet it had brought no coolness with it. The evening light, however, had so clouded over, that Miss Granard proposed candles, and drew down the blinds.

"I am anxious to go on, if Mr. Mowatt is not tired," she said, with a calmness she was far from feeling. A foreboding had crept over her mind that something was in store which might be very hard to deal with.

Mr. Darlington's statement was paged and stitched together, like a MS. for the press, and the writing was bold and firm, though that of an old man. It was addressed—

"To my Nephew, Henry Stormount.

"I am not going to write a confession, Henry, but to state facts as they occurred. Confession implies repentance, and I have very little doubt that I should act just in the same way if it could all happen over again. But I give you notice that you may think differently, and it will be a satisfaction to my mind that some one should know the truth. I have made you my heir, and it is for you to decide how to employ my money when you know how I first began to make it.

"When I entered Baines's house of business, as a clerk, I had eighty pounds a year. This was in 1802. They had dealings with foreign firms which there is no occasion for me to go into ; it was the sort of business by which fortunes were sometimes quickly made, and I was put there to make mine if I could.

"I lived as you young men never think of living now ; and I contrived in a couple of years to put by something. The war with France, which tried so many, was a fine time for us ; losses of course we had, but they were counterbalanced by the gains ; and I began to think that the day might come when I should have a vessel of my own. Baines and Co. had by this time found out that I was worth my wages, and they sent me down to the Sussex coast, where they had several warehouses and did a brisk business, both in the broad daylight and in the dark nights. In plain English, while keeping on

good terms with the law in appearance, we actually set it at defiance; and every smuggler of those parts was our friend. And now I come to the scene in my life which has never passed from my memory, though I have never yet described it to a living soul.

"One September evening, in the year '5, I was in the office at Hilton—a quiet little fishing place, where a good deal of our business was done, and where I still own several houses. I had been drawing my savings out of the bank in readiness for a purchase I intended making of a share in a free-trader. They amounted to about a hundred and seventy guineas, and it was a serious venture for a young fellow who had no other capital to fall back upon. The money was locked up in the safe, and I was overlooking some accounts, when a sailor, who knew me well, appeared at the door, and without ceremony showed in two strangers—an elderly man and a little girl. In a few hasty whispers he made me understand they had just been set ashore—were evidently emigrants or runaways from Boney's prisons, had been knocked about with rough weather, and had been referred by the master of the vessel to Messrs. Baines. Perhaps my honour would stand a bit of 'baccy for luck. This by way of parenthesis.

"My honour stood the 'baccy, for it was the usage of those parts when a customer was brought, and as I closed the door behind him, the stranger, who was a mulatto, turned quickly round, and in rather provincial French begged me to secure it, as his errand was private. The bolt was a little stiff, I remember, and by the time I had overcome its resistance he had found a seat by the fire for the child, and was rubbing her tiny hands in his own, murmuring some words that she seemed to understand, though I did not, and which made her look at me with a smile. A pretty little morsel of a thing she was, a gentleman's daughter, as I could see, though her clothes were plain and all the worse for a rough sea voyage in a trading vessel; and her hair, which had been tucked up under her beaver hat, was half down her back, and wet with the spray. The man was so tender with her, and yet so respectful, that I thought he was no relation—indeed, when I put the question he held up his hands in horror. She was his dear Mademoiselle, and he was her faithful servant—that was the only link between them. He had rescued her, a helpless orphan, from the hands of kinsmen, who only wanted to prevent her ever claiming her rights; and, having escaped the dangers of the sea, his object now was to conduct her to the home of a friend of the family, a lady who kept a school; he did not say where. My inquiries on the subject seemed to excite his suspicions, and he grew so short and guarded in his replies, that I fully expected to see him march out, young lady and all, without entering on his real business. This, however, he could not afford to do; and it presently came out that he was in pressing, immediate need of cash: first, to defray their travelling expenses—for which a few guineas

would suffice; but principally to pay a year's board in advance to the head of the school, without which he seemed to fear the child might not be received. Would I advance a hundred and twenty guineas, on good security?

"On good security, I told him, money could generally be found, though this was short notice; but when the security proved to be nothing more than a stranger's written promise to repay, I could not help him. And when he thoroughly understood I was in earnest, he came to the point. He had only one piece of property with him, a coffer, clamped with silver, which till now he had kept hidden under his cloak. It was sealed in several places, and not even for Mademoiselle's benefit would he break one of these seals. But he would leave it in my hands as his security, to be restored with them, unbroken, intact, on his return with the hundred and twenty guineas—and such interest as we might agree upon. It was a curious business, but after much haggling, I agreed to do it for twenty guineas—making his debt a hundred and forty; fresh seals were applied to the coffer by us both, and it was locked up in my safe. I then handed him over the cash, and a receipt for the box: and he grew impatient to start. I helped him to get a post-chaise, and gave him directions how to reach London. Whether London was to be their final destination or only a halting-place, I did not discover; it was obvious that the servant was resolved I should know as little as possible. They had some refreshments in the office, and the little girl came up to me before they left, with a pretty little curtsy of gratitude, to thank me for my goodness to them. Poor little waif! I see her now as I write; I have seen her a hundred times, and of late years more plainly than ever."

Mowatt paused, and looked at Miss Granard. "A singular story, is it not?"

"Has Mr. Archdale any idea of this?" returned Adela.

"No one has seen this document since it came into my hands. But I see that you have struck on the right interpretation."

"That child must have been Mrs. Raymond! I have heard her speak of the night of her landing in England, and of waiting in a dull room with a high desk, with some one who was kind to her. Oh, what a surprise for her! Shall we go round to her this evening?"

"My dear," interposed Miss Joseph, "it is not an evening for anyone to venture out. We shall have a heavy storm presently; and besides——"

Mowatt finished the sentence. "And besides, I would advise you to hear the whole before you are in haste to repeat it."

Adela's colour faded. "You are right, sir; please go on."

The insane whisper at his heart, that he could wish this evening to last for years, almost took away the power to see or read. She placed wine and water at his elbow, reproaching herself for want of consideration. He drank what she poured out, and went on with Mr. Darlington's narrative.

"It was not till my strange clients were gone, that my mind began to misgive me about my own part in the transaction. Where and how was my borrower to obtain funds for the redemption of the pledge? Might it not all be a plot—a smuggler's trick—to throw dust in the eyes of authority? Might not the coffer itself contain stolen or contraband goods? and so forth ran my doubts. All I could do now, was to keep the whole matter secret. At the end of a week, hearing nothing from him, I began to grow anxious; the loss of my money was a serious matter: the post-boy had taken them a stage only on the London road, and knew no more."

Mowatt paused, and turned another sheet.

"One day, however, there came a message in haste to me—a stranger was ill at an inn ten miles off, who had my address in his pocket, and, as no one else knew him, the landlord sent a horse over for me. I arrived too late; it was a case of small-pox, and the poor fellow was just breathing his last. It was the mulatto. I examined everything belonging to him before it was burnt, finding my own voucher, and a few guineas, but no sign of the redemption-money, nor any clue to his history or that of the child. He had come there some days before, looking very ill, and had been hardly conscious since; the money about him just defrayed the expenses, and there was too much anxiety to have him buried out of the way, for anyone to be too curious as to his antecedents. Emigrants came and went in those days, and nobody thought it extraordinary.

"On my return, I had a good look at the coffer; I found the weight greater than I had supposed, and felt convinced it was a deposit of value. I secretly made an outside shell to fit it, painting it with my name, and waited; waited to see if anyone would take steps to redeem it. But from that day to this, Harry, I have never had the mystery cleared up.

"There came an hour of temptation. I wanted funds for an enterprise of great promise—I had been cheated of my due; what was to hinder my repaying myself? This is no confession, as I told you—I should do the thing again, most likely; but it cost me a struggle. Enough that I did it. I broke the seals, forced the locks, and found what was evidently a family hoard. Rouleaux of double louis, ingots of gold, probably melted down from plate and ornaments, and several parcels of valuable gems, made up a treasure which I could roughly estimate at many thousands: an instance common enough in those revolutionary days of property being secreted for years and ultimately lost: and the probability was almost a certainty, that, except through the little girl, no living person could ever trace the box to me. Should they do so, however, my answer, I thought, was ready—if they brought me my voucher, they should have it—not till then.

"I say I thought this, but I never really meant it. My debt I had a right to claim, and by degrees I disposed of some of the gold to great advantage, so as to embark in the speculation I desired.

They say the evil one tempts by good fortune ; perhaps luck tempted me : and bit by bit the hoard of the emigrant passed into other hands, leaving a rich return in mine—for everything that money touched went well. I bought several houses at Hilton—the office being one of them, and it has never been altered to this day. They were purchased out of the profits of the hundred and forty guineas, and you will find the accounts connected with them in a separate book.

“ You are wondering, perhaps, if I ever made any inquiries after the child. I did, again and again, but without success ; and I did not care to advertise or take anyone into my confidence. I have often conjectured what I should do if I found her, and I fancy we should have agreed that I had been a successful steward, and was entitled to a handsome share of the profits. Latterly, I have begun to wish I had never opened the box, and perhaps you, as my heir, may share in the wish. I leave the matter in your hands—you will use your own discretion—only be discreet, for if the story got wind, you would soon have a swarm of claimants upon you. You will find the results of my inquiries among my private papers.

“ MILES DARLINGTON.”

The growling of the thunder, which had been gradually increasing in strength while Mowatt was reading, became a crash as he laid down the manuscript, and before Adela could ask a question, a noise overhead, followed by a cry, made both her and Miss Joseph rush to the stairs, knowing that Emily had been frightened. Miss Granard preferred, however, to go up alone ; when another rattle and crash, and a call from Adela, took up Mowatt. Emily had been awakened by the storm, it had blended itself with her dreams so as to affect her painfully ; and the ladies were glad to accept his services in soothing the child to sleep. This good work accomplished, he went back to the drawing-room.

But, in the surgeon's haste to rush to be of assistance, he had never thought of the papers. One glance at the table was enough to tell him they were gone.

C H A P T E R X X X .

THE PROSPECT CLOUDED.

“ DEAR Adela, what has happened ?—That miserable man has not been here again, I hope !” said Miss Combermere, when, the next morning, she found her friend looking as white and haggard as if she had been sitting up for a week. And though Miss Granard tried to smile and hope she had been nervous about a trifle, she could only by an effort keep from tears.

“ Emily is with kind Miss Joseph,” she explained. “ They are to make themselves extremely learned about ants, and are gone to the Archdeacon to see if he has any books on the subject. With those

two I can feel the child is safe ; and I have a great deal to tell you on which I shall want advice."

"You shall want for nothing we can give you. My father was struck dumb when he saw your face ; we both thought the spirits had paid you a visit in our absence. Come into his room ; we shall be cooler there, and we will tell Charles to let nobody in—unless it be Mr. Archdale."

"No, no—he must not come in—I could not see him yet," she returned, in an agitation that increased Kate's curiosity. Orders were given as she wished ; and Sir Marcus made her sit down in a shady corner, and kindly reminded her that he was, as always, at her service. In a few words, Adela related what had passed the evening before—how Mr. Mowatt had brought the missing packet of papers, with his own notes in addition, and how they had been mysteriously abstracted from the table while he was attending to Emily.

"Their loss would be serious enough, as making our duty more difficult," concluded Adela : "but the worst part of the business is that we are afraid Paul has taken them."

"Paul?" repeated Sir Marcus. "What makes you think so?"

"Miss Joseph had been informed by Dr. Thaddeus, who seems to have agents everywhere, that Paul was to be sent down here as a spy on Mr. Mowatt, and, if possible, to obtain some secret he kept from the Professor. If Paul has done this, and the papers go into that man's hands, there is a great cause for alarm on Emily's account, and our precautions must be doubled. Mr. Mowatt was in a terrible state of mind ; he left us while the rain was pouring in torrents, and I have not seen him since."

"How could Paul be here without our knowing it?"

"Mr. Mowatt thinks the jockey who was riding Cairngorm was Paul in disguise."

"The rascal ! But I can hardly give him up without proof," added Sir Marcus, thoughtfully. "He would not be a party to anything that could injure Emily. You are too anxious about that child, my dear ; you must not let every supposition take the colour out of your cheeks like this."

"It is not that only—" Adela's voice grew very hoarse, and she had to pause a few moments before she went on. "I want to speak to you about the contents of the papers themselves, as far as I can recollect them."

And she gave a tolerably faithful summary of what she had heard. Her listeners were as much struck as she had been.

"There can be little doubt to whom it all refers," observed Sir Marcus. "Mrs. Raymond's story is conclusive on that point. It is the dream that has been haunting her all her life—and that has got into Ernest's brain too. But they would find it hard work to prove a distinct claim on old Darlington's estate."

"That is what occurred to me," said Miss Granard, "and that

their only chance of recovering their own, if it be theirs—we must make quite sure of that, by dint of collecting evidence—will lie in the integrity and honour of this poor child. And it must be my work to train her for it.”

“I see. It will be an awkward position for you.”

“Sir Marcus! Is it possible that you do not understand me? Do not you see, as I have been seeing all night long, that everything between—between me and Mr. Archdale—must be at an end?”

“That cannot be necessary,” Kate eagerly interposed. “If a thing is right, that is enough, and it is no fault of yours that it may be for your advantage.”

Adela shook her head, as if the argument were torture; it had been whispered in her ear several times already, and only added to her pain.

“That poor Mrs. Dangerfield might well say I did not know what I was undertaking. But this much I do know—I never could teach that child the duty of restitution and self-sacrifice for my own possible benefit. It will be hard enough without that.”

The case was, indeed, a peculiar one, and advice was not much easier to give than comfort. Sir Marcus observed that they had still to make sure of their facts, and that nothing ought to be said until they had heard Mrs. Raymond’s story in full. And he proposed they should all three go to her that evening, trusting Emily to Miss Joseph. Meanwhile, he went on to the Archdeacon, with whom Mowatt had been already.

“It is a very strange business,” remarked Mr. Burleigh. “The lad has disappeared, leaving the horse behind him; and the two gentlemen in Mr. Lazarus’s service profess to know nothing about it, except that he told them he had been sent for. My own belief is that they know a great deal more than any of us are aware of. But that boy is a mystery: and it is a disgrace I shall not soon get over, that he has been here under our very noses without our being the wiser.”

That some one had been in the garden and climbed in at the window, was plain from the wet footmarks on the carpet and the print of a shoe in the flower-bed. Remembering the boy’s performance at Comber Court, there was nothing surprising in such a feat as this—only those who took an interest in Paul Rocket were reluctant to believe he could be an enemy. The story was carefully kept from Emily’s knowledge; and one of the trials of that long day was the necessity of maintaining a cheerful aspect before her. The natural history of ants proved a resource exceeding in value all that Dr. Thaddeus had intended.

Miss Joseph gravely assured Emily that the ants were her special department, she knew their whole history from beginning to end; heads of departments always knew everything.

They had planned great things for the evening, which they were to spend together alone; but Mrs. Raymond unintentionally crossed

their plans, by sending an especial invitation to Miss Joseph, and claimed her little Snowdrop as a right. Sir Marcus hastily decided that it might be for the best that Emily should hear Mrs. Raymond's story. The more impression it made on her, the better.

"Remember," he added kindly to Adela, pitying the distress in her eyes, "we know nothing yet for certain, and no decision can be come to till all has been well weighed and considered. You have so far pledged yourself to Archdale that you cannot lightly set him aside."

"Lightly?" she thought, in her anguish. "It means parting with what is dearer to me than life."

How she got through that day she could hardly tell. It was fortunate that Ernest did not call. He had accompanied Mowatt in an attempt to find Paul, and returned only in time to receive the party at his grandmother's. That Adela should be uneasy and look pale was only natural under the circumstances; and her lover was as yet far from dreaming of the mine that underlay his own castle of bliss. Ernest began reassuring her on her ward's account; though the suggestion he made was singularly inappropriate. If Emily's safety were endangered by the loss of the papers, as he had been told by Mowatt might be the case, the best safeguard he could think of would be to give her another protector.

"You have a right to appoint a second guardian, Adela; and who should he be but your husband? If we could make her a home, I would undertake to keep out the enemy. Just hear what granny says on the subject. She would join housekeeping with us if we asked her: and with Bennet and Charles we should be the best governed master and mistress in the world."

The torture of seeing his eager, happy looks, of hearing his plans, of feeling the sweetness of his presence, and of knowing all the while that unless something marvellous intervened in her favour, she should have to give him up, left Adela with the mournful sensation of never having appreciated her happiness till it was lost. The suffering which she fain would have concealed was so plainly read by Sir Marcus, that he resolved to end her suspense as soon as possible; and, early in the evening, he begged to remind their hostess of a promise not yet fulfilled. She had pledged herself to tell them a story of her childhood; and as yet they only knew it in fragments. He believed he spoke for the whole party when he asked her to begin at the beginning, and tell them all she could.

Mrs. Raymond shook her head with a sigh and a smile. "I believe my wisest plan would be never to speak of it again, Sir Marcus. My daughter writes me word that she is haunted by it till she is nearly ill. But if it really be the wish of all my guests, I must not refuse, though it should be the last time that I tell it. My little Snowdrop is not the only wanderer who has dropped in upon strangers unexpectedly. It will be hard for her to understand her shrivelled,

grey-headed fairy having ever been a tired little girl of six years old, without a home where to hide her head. But such things have been, and those who live through them, may well point out to the young ones how mercy and goodness have followed them all the days of their life ; even though by ways that they knew not.

“ I saw you with your little book of history yesterday, my dear, interested, as we have all been, in the sad story of the French Revolution. My father’s family were among those who suffered greatly, though he and my mother contrived to escape destruction, and lived for several years in privacy among humble friends in Normandy ; his nurse and her husband gave them a home, and passed them among their neighbours as relations. My mother was English, and the marriage had offended some of her family, and my father’s refusal to emigrate was considered a disgrace ; but he would not desert his country, and when they might have come over here, he preferred the farm work, under the name of his foster-parents, to the life of an exile under his own. What my mother went through I shall never know ; I only learned what I tell you after I grew up.

“ They both died when I was very young, and I was the only child who survived them. About that time, a cousin of the younger branch of the de Sancys gained credit and promotion under Buonaparte, and obtained a grant of the family lands. It came to his knowledge that my father had died and left a daughter, and he was advised to secure my guardianship, and obviate all possible claims by disposing of me in marriage when I was old enough. The idea of my falling into the hands of one who had, as she felt, gone over to the enemy, preyed on my mother’s mind in her last illness, and it was her earnest entreaty to good nurse Jeanne to contrive to send me to England, where some friends of hers kept a school. After her death, this plan was carried out ; and I have a mournful recollection of being cried over and kissed by dear old Jeanne, and being told I was going to be made a lady of, only I was never to forget her who loved me so. I remember that grief of hers, which I could hardly understand, though the sorrows that went before are only hazy visions—I am not sitting here to tell you my whole life, but one small part of it, you will remember.

“ One friend we had, besides that dear old couple whose name we had chosen to bear, and this was a mulatto servant of my mother’s, born on her father’s West Indian estate, and devoted to her from his boyhood. He had followed her fortunes after her marriage ; and, though he had long received his freedom, worked for us, I have been told, night and day. His partial knowledge of English made him the fittest person to take charge of me ; indeed, without his help my escape could never have been managed at all. And no one could have been a kinder, more loving protector than Brutus, who would have laid down his life to please me, or save me.

"As you may believe, my personal recollections are broken up into scenes such as impress themselves on a child's memory. I do remember being in a ship, and the salt water dashing over us, and Brutus, holding me tight with one hand, and a box in the other, laughing, and telling me it was all play. Then I see myself in a room with a high desk, and a gentleman who was kind to me, and gave me gingerbread, and made me warm at his fire. Then came a long drive with Brutus, who told me stories whenever I asked for them, but who seemed at last to grow very tired, though I little knew why. Our journey ended at last—how long it was I cannot say—in our reaching a house in a garden, where some ladies received me, and promised to make me as happy as they could. Alas! the first blow after this was the parting with Brutus; and it was only after I had been told, again and again, that he would come back when he had settled some business, that I could be consoled for his leaving me behind. Day after day, week after week, I looked for his return, but he never came; and from the hour that he wished me good-bye I never knew what became of him."

Old woman as she was, the tears were in her eyes as she recalled her long, past sorrow. Emily, who was sitting at her feet, looked earnestly up in her face.

"Then shall I never see or hear anything more of Paul?"

"I trust you will, Snowdrop; but it is all in God's hands. I have no doubt He took care of poor Brutus, though He never saw fit to let me know what became of him. What I have long believed is that he died of the small-pox, which broke out in the school after my entrance, and was supposed to have been brought there by us. I escaped it myself, but it did great mischief to the good ladies with whom I lived, and one of them never recovered it. Well, time went on, and at last came peace, and friends found me out, and I paid a visit to the old farm, where Jeanne was still alive, though very infirm. From her I learned what I should never else have known—that Brutus carried to England with him my portion, as she called it, the property my parents had saved and hidden, not daring to be thought in possession of gold or jewels; that he also had my mother's will, and some papers to be delivered to a lawyer in London, who would act as my guardian; and that no one had heard anything of us since we left France. I remembered then that in the rough weather on board, everything we had was lost except the box, which he carried under his arm, but which never reached the school. Again and again have friends and lawyers tried out of my recollections and the evidence of those who educated me, to trace back the way we travelled, and find anyone who remembered us. Advertisements and promise of reward were tried in vain; never has the slightest clue been discovered either to the fate of the property—my dowry—or of my childhood's friend. The one point on which there can be no question, is the fidelity of Brutus himself."

There was silence when Mrs. Raymond paused. "Were you happy in the school?" asked Emily.

"Do not ask me, dear child. I was a charge and a burden to those on whom I had no claim; and I had been used to a great deal of petting and freedom, and was a long time in growing accustomed to the change. But in time I grew braver, and learned to love old England as if I had been born in her. So now I have told you my story, and I do not think I shall ever tell it again. I have indulged the wish that I could recover that lost dowry, and have something worth leaving my dear daughter and grandson."

Her kind eyes rested on Ernest's. He turned from the loving look to meet that of his betrothed, and saw there the saddest expression of which so fair a face was capable. "Are you ill?" he whispered.

"No," was Adela's answer, "only tired." And she spoke the truth, for she was weary in mind and body. With the last faint hope of having been mistaken, sank the courage which had held her up; and her only longing now was to lie down in the dark and rest, before striking the blow which was to cut off his joy and her own.

When the party broke up, Ernest would have walked home with them, but Adela begged him not.

"You know I start to-morrow night?" he said. "I shall come over in the morning."

"Yes, yes; I must see you," was her reply, as she returned the pressure of his hand, and felt as if to let those thin fingers go would be to sink into fathomless waters. But she tore her own away, with a suddenness that was so unlike her usual manner, as to give him very little chance of the good night's rest she meant him to have.

She had in fact made him seriously uneasy: and the long night hours passed in distracting conjectures. This night was a severe test of his resolution against Mowatt's dangerous remedies. He did resist them, however, and towards morning fell asleep.

A letter from his mother greeted him at breakfast. With pain and vexation he read of the scene at the Professor's—until now, Mrs. Archdale had not had the courage to confess it. Mrs. Raymond was more vexed than even Ernest. What would Adela think of this?

"I am very sorry, my dear boy, that anyone should have done this; but it serves me right, as an unthankful old woman. If I had accepted the will of Heaven about the loss of the money, your mother would never have been tempted to allow such a man to make my name a handle for his stage tricks. It is a lesson I shall not forget. I deserved rebuke, and it has come by her hand."

"If so, granny, it has come to me too, and I am not in your mood of humility. Should that fellow have dared anything to bring trouble on us or on Adela, it will not be his noiseless hinges, nor his unseen doorkeeper, that will prevent me telling him my mind. Adela's looks have haunted me all night."

Whether Adela's night had been worse than her lover's, we need not inquire; she was on the watch for his arrival, and received him alone. They walked out to a favourite nook, where they had sat before, and could imagine themselves alone in the world. Adela was outwardly calm, though pale; her sadness was all the deeper for the endurance that had grown in the watches of the night. Inwardly trembling, he knew not why, Ernest refrained from expressing impatience; he seated her on the dry turf and moss, where he could take his place at her feet, and look up at the noble head with its background of green leaves and blue sky—certain that some trial was coming, but never dreaming of what it was to be.

The blow fell only too surely. Adela Granard told him she had done him a grievous wrong in engaging her faith to him, and accepting his in return; a wrong she never could have committed had she known what she now knew—that there was an obstacle to their union, which could not be got over. She could only implore his pardon, release him from his engagement, and entreat him to give her back a promise which she had no right to make.

He was stunned, breathless, unbelieving; each in turn. He took to remonstrating, not against the sentence, for that appeared simply not believable; but against the depression of spirits that had made her imagine it. Depression it was, nothing else; she had too much to do and think about—she was worried out of her life—he would talk to Sir Marcus, to the Archdeacon, to his mother, and ask if it were not possible to be a child's guardian without being the victim of all that had been done, or left undone before the poor sprite was in her hands at all. He had a right, which no one else had, to inquire into it all, and he meant to do it. She stopped him with a heavy sigh.

"If I am the victim of what others have done, or left undone, let me at least be an innocent one; let me suffer, as I must, but in the path of duty. Ernest, believe me, it must be; should I sit here and tell you so could I see a way of escape anywhere? I undertook the charge of guardianship without knowing what it would cost me, and I have only just discovered that this guardianship is incompatible with my engagement to be your wife."

"What makes you think so?" he asked, trying to speak quietly. "Is it anything you have heard of *me*?"

"You are still what I believed you from the first. And—I may say it now, very dear to me."

"Are you under any obligation made by others? It sounds impossible, but conscientious minds have been sometimes made wretched by such a cause."

"In some sense I am; honour and uprightness are both concerned. I cannot do my duty by that child, and keep the pledge I gave her mother, if I am to be your wife, Ernest; and the only alternative——"

"There is one, then? Tell it me."

"Is to break my word to the dead, and abandon the living to others. What would you think of me if I did this?"

"You could never act otherwise than as an angel; and I would fight to the death sooner than give up the poor child; but I am not going to give you up either," was his bewildered answer. "I must not force a confidence you do not think right to offer; I will ask no questions till you tell me I may; I will wait years, if need be, and serve for you till Emily grows up and is off your hands: but, unsay what we have said, unswear what we have sworn, unlive what we have lived—Adela, my own beloved, it is an unrighteous and unholy thing you require of me, and consent I never will!"

He held her hands clasped in his own, and pressed them to his lips. She was startled by his burning kisses.

"You have had a bad night," she said, sorrowfully, "and I am making you worse. Are you sure you do not feel the effects of that ride?"

"I have felt nothing but anxiety about you. Adela! you are trying my affection all this time; you are not in earnest. It is impossible you can have changed to me so soon—so terribly!"

"Changed? In what, except in my hopes? I was so happy a few days ago, and you know it. Now, all I can do is to hold fast the one thing I am sure of—that I must choose between Emily and you. Oh, Ernest, help me! Pity me, or I shall not be able to bear it. And I must—I must!"

He caught her in his arms; he held her firmly to his heart. "Listen, my darling," he said, in the softest tones of his naturally soft voice: "if it be really, as you say, that duty compels us to wait, I will be patient—I will not hinder you. I will go away and work for you in silence—I will take Mr. Bourne's offer of going to India, to America, to the world's end, if needs must, till your task is over; and when you are free, I will claim you for my own. Or, if I am to stay in London, well and good: we will meet when we can, write every day, and look forward to being together when the obstacle is removed. Anything sooner than let you go, Adela; you are mine, and I will never give you up, until death us do part. No, nor even then!"

"No," she repeated, weeping, "then, least of all, for we might hope to be together hereafter. See, Ernest—you are so far in the right, that I can only act with your sanction. I put the matter in your hands; you shall hear all I know, and judge for yourself and me."

(To be continued.)

HOW SHAKESPEARE'S SKULL WAS STOLEN.

Circa 1794.

BY A WARWICKSHIRE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PLOT.

I SELDOM pass the sleepy-looking "Bear" Inn, originally the "Bear and Ragged Staff" (the cognizance of a branch of the Warwick family, who lived at Beauchamp's Court near here), in the town of Alcester, without calling to mind a remarkable interview which took place some eighty years ago in connection with the front room on the right-hand side of that quaint Jacobean entrance. And now that Mr. M., the only person likely to be affected by this disclosure, has passed away at the age of 75, I no longer feel hesitation in transcribing from rough notes and memoranda made and collected by him, a series of facts which may startle all those who, like myself, reverence the very dust of the immortal bard.

That Shakespeare's skull was stolen admits, I think, of very little doubt; yet I must not anticipate, but endeavour to trace "this strange eventful history" from its beginning.

The uncle of the late Mr. M., a youth who bore the name of Frank Chambers, was placed with a medical man (the only one practising in Alcester) about the year 1787. He was a wild, rather dashing young fellow; not bad looking, if a portrait taken in after years be evidence; and, coming straight from attendance at a London hospital, found the exclusive society of a small town uncongenial, and its restraints irksome. Owing to a certain mild escapade—the manuscript alleges that it was nothing more heinous than a practical joke upon the curate in charge at the tumble-down old rectory—he found it convenient to leave Alcester and to go abroad; and as Englishmen did not then dream of a trip to America or to Australia, his wanderings were confined to France. The heart of the French nation was then beginning to throb with the feverish heat of revolution, and "gentlemen of the pavé" had already defined liberty on the "*lucus a non lucendo*" principle.

Frank Chambers, like Arthur Young, was a strict observer of the national moral bankruptcy, and three of his letters from Rheims show that he was not deceived, like some greater minds among his own countrymen, by the tendency of thought and action in France at that remarkable period. When one hundred thousand Frenchmen were compelled by the murderous hatred of an ignorant mob, and by the destruction of their stately châteaux, to flee in haste, there was "no

room of safety" for a son of perfide Albion. Frank returned to England, during what year I know not, but in a letter written from London, without date, he mentions the exceptional severity of the winter, which probably was that of 1791.

Again he came to Alcester, and, assisting his former employer, was well known in the neighbourhood as a jovial, light-hearted fellow.

Two or three years pass without record, until he mentions the arrival of Lord William Seymour on a visit to his brother, Lord Hertford, at Ragley Hall, a splendid mansion overlooking, like a haughty custodian, the quiet little town.

Frank Chambers became acquainted with Lord William, although there could be little fellowship between the harsh, penurious, and eccentric habits of his lordship and those of the incipient surgeon. But the intimacy was of this advantage to the latter: that it proved the introduction to the excellent and sometimes notable company which the newly-created marquis gathered round him at rare intervals at his Warwickshire seat. It also leads to that startling adventure which until now has been as secret as the grave.

I have more than once questioned the late Mr. M. as to its precise date, but he assured me that, although his uncle kept a rough diary at intervals, half professional, half domestic—extracts from which are before me, wherein even such trivial matters are entered as: "Aug. 4th. Rode over to the 'Love Cup,' at Alne, where I had a quart of Barlum perry. Saw Jim Morris; he has a fine colt at the Mill pasture." "March 8th. Drove the doctor to a consultation with Dr. Brandis at Hinley" (query, Henley-in-Arden)—the year is seldom given, or even the month.

He seems, however, to have taken some pains in recording observations made by men of mark at Lord Hertford's table, and found especial pleasure in describing the good things with which that table was furnished, mixing, as in Tom Hood's sonnet, sauce and sentiment with concise impartiality. Thus he writes: "When Garrick was at Ragley, some years ago, Lord Hertford says that he gave a comical performance in the steward's room for the amusement of the servants and others; and he told his host afterwards that one of the audience was as —— hard to unlace as the old Speaker —— (the name is illegible), for when the folks were shaking with laughter 'Hob-nail' grunted out, 'Didst ever th' see Jack Murrel grin through a horse-collar at the "Barley Mow," Stoodley, eh?'"

Then follows a minute description of the viands at that day's dinner, with the remark, "The popular dish, macaroni, as served by the Duke of York's chef de cuisine—delicious!"

Also, "My lord told Mr. William Throckmorton, in my hearing, that when Hume and Lord Lyttleton (this must have been Thomas, the second baron, better known as the wicked Lord Lyttleton) were at the Hall they had a violent quarrel, in consequence of which 'a meeting' was arranged at the kennels; 'but,' said he, 'Nugent

smoothed Tom's ruffled feathers, and his honour was carried to Halesowen that night, whilst I "satisfied" Hume next day by letting him contradict everybody round the table.' We had stewed eels, Severn lampreys, with a haunch of mutton wrapt in paste, boiled turkey, ham, and pastry, with cheese to follow."

I now come to the careful entry in the diary which seems to have suggested the extraordinary expedition of Frank Chambers. Mark me, there is no date; but from the two entries immediately preceding—"Received a brace of pheasants from John Wilcox, of Wixford: first this season," and "Lord Hertford tells me of the serious illness of Mr. Millar, his son's old tutor"—we may reasonably fix the autumn of 1794. "Sent for to Ragley Hall to converse with the Abbé Latour, who had just arrived from France with dismal accounts of the provinces. Fearful scenes, which I was able to confirm from my experience. Found that the Abbé knew Edgworth, Gardel, Rancourt, and Bertini among former acquaintances of mine. We dined at six o'clock: everything pretty good, but not so well served as usual. Had to wait for hermitage. Besides Lord Hertford and the ladies, met the Rev. Samuel Parr, two Mr. Conways, Mr. Ingram, also Captain Fortescue, Mr. Knight, Mr. Rudge, Joshua Jennings, and other neighbouring gentry. Dr. Parr very glum: sate with a large napkin under his chin, heeding nobody, and feeding as if the fellow had kept right off all the fasts in the calendar. . . . After dinner the conversation somehow turned upon the 'Stratford Jubilee,' and Captain Fortescue wondered if Shakespeare's image in the old church, especially the head, was really like him. 'You had best dig him up, John Fortescue,' said Dr. Parr (who lisped, and called the poet Thackspear); 'may I be there to thee.' Then Squire Moore mentioned that old Horace Walpole had offered, after the Jubilee, to give George Selwyn three hundred guineas if he could secure Shakespeare's head. Whereupon Parr remarked, 'If he cudth theal away hith brainth, that were theap to him, thir.' Afterwards I walked home beside the doctor's pony to Bartlam's. He was near being spilt opposite Griffith's at Arrow."

CHAPTER II.

THE PLOT.

HERE we leave the diary for a time, and I quote from notes made after conversation with the late Mr. M., who often begged the recital of this singular exploit from his Uncle Chambers, and who himself transcribed in full some salient features of it. From which it appears that, upon returning home after the above dinner at Ragley, Frank Chambers pondered well how he could gratify his old inclination for adventure, and the liberal curiosity of the well-known curioso of Strawberry Hill. He then lodged at the surgery, a comely-looking

house still standing at the corner of Malt Mill Lane, Alcester. It was built during the reign of Queen Anne by a branch of the Boteler family, whose arms—a chevron between three cups, as seen in the great east window of the chantry chapel attached to St. Milburge's at Wixford—were, until the door was renewed some fifty years ago, carved on an oval shield within the scroll pediment over the entrance.

Here, in a room on the first floor, still, I think, bearing traces of old adornment, three men joined Chambers one night in the autumn of 1794. Their names were Cull, Dyer, and Hawtin, and they were supposed to call for some medicine for their wives. The only bottles on the table were, however, supplied by the near-hand "Golden Cup," and the medicines were of an extremely comfortable and exhilarating nature. Frank Chambers had some professional dealings with the men previously; and he used laughingly to regret that, with a large churchyard within a few feet of his own door, even then full to repletion, he had been obliged to further the interests of science at the expense of the disused humanity of a neighbouring parish, Alcester churchyard being too public for nocturnal visitations.

"It is not for that I want you," he said, "but to get at the skull of a chap who has been dead nearly 200 years."

"Why, you've got one as looks a thousan' year old already," interposed Mr. Hawtin. There was a somewhat grim article of the kind nibbling the hard ledge of the high mantelpiece.

"That's it, Jim; I want another to bear him company; the poor fellow finds it unked here o' nights since he was swinging free and easy on Mappleborough Green."

"Well, young master," exclaimed Harry Cull, "I are game, so be these; where's the dig, and what's the shot?"

"Stratford Church, and three pounds apiece for the job."

"With laps," put in Hawtin, who had at first hesitated about joining, and whose bibulous propensities were notorious.

"Any quantity after it is over; not a drop before," said Chambers.

"I met these fellows at Stratford Church" (writes the late Mr. M., from Frank Chambers's dictation). "It is so long ago that I forget the exact date, yet I remember uncommonly well it was a near thing about getting there at all; for just when I ought to have been setting off, old Grafton down the street took it into his head to have a fit, and as he was a capital patient, I had to remain by the bedside until the doctor returned from seeing Sarah Wilcox of More Hall. It was very dark, too; and in my haste I pitched head-foremost over a footstone near the west door and cut my nose. To my surprise I found Cull and Tom Dyer already hard on, whilst Hawtin scouted, shovelling the earth from the base of a new square tomb on the south side of the chancel, about ten yards from the small door.

“ ‘What the deuce are you at?’ said I.

“ ‘Why, you see,’ answered Dyer, ‘we warn’t a going to wait here all night; and this ’ere’s your mon, I reckon.’

“What could the idiots be dreaming about? Their mistake was afterwards thus explained. I had mentioned to Hawtin (it must have been when I was top-heavy) that the skull I wished to secure at Stratford was that of one William Shakespeare. Now, Hawtin was sweet on a Stratford lass named Esther White, who lived in service at Parson Davenport’s, and went courting every Sunday. Like a fool, he told her our intention. He would have worked the oracle to better purpose could he have obtained the keys of the church. Hawtin, who was rather scared at the adventure, asked Esther if she knew anything about William Shakespeare. At first she could only call to mind an inn bearing that name; but at length she remembered a man asking to see master about a tomb to William Shakespeare, and she showed Hawtin where it was.

“The maid’s memory was defective, and neither she nor Hawtin could read, or another name would have appeared, the tomb being really built over the remains of William Shakespeare Payton, a man well known in Stratford, who died in the autumn a year or two before. Hawtin’s hesitation about the adventure had turned to eagerness when he conceived that this tomb would be the centre of our operations; and he was taken aback when I whispered to him that he had set his mates on the wrong scent.

“ ‘Put the soil back,’ I said, ‘this is not the man; didn’t I tell you he was inside, and 200 years old.’

“ ‘Yes!’ answered one, ‘but we thought that that was only your gammon.’

“ ‘So you wished to gammon me in return; but now, my lads,’ I continued, ‘sharp’s the word; we have lost two hours already, and Battersbee, with his bull’s-eye, looks round sometimes.’

“I thought we never should get inside that church. The windows were far above our heads, and well protected by stout stanchions. Dyer, who had served in a smithy, worked with a will at the lock of the chancel door, using the tools I had brought; but those confounded old locks have a way of keeping close, and it would not yield. Further down on the same side was a larger door of ribbed oak, and here Tom was making way when Hawtin scattered us with the caution, ‘Men among the trees.’

“I crept round towards the porch, and, resting on a mound, I plainly heard footsteps on the broad flags in the avenue. I crept nearer. The overhanging boughs, with remnants of leaves, made it too dark to distinguish any form. I doubt if I could have seen a ghost; but I was within a few feet of the heavy tread of a man, multiplied by Hawtin’s fears—a man, as shown by the voice, which was low and husky. He paced to and fro, the whole length of the avenue; sometimes hurriedly, and then he would pause. Likely

enough he had just left the public-house, for his speech was sometimes incoherent and sometimes sadly too plain. He gave vent to a deep trouble. His daughter, for he called passionately upon his child, had been buried here. A great wrong had been done, by whom I could not make out; but he shook the gates angrily, and muttered three times, 'I will—yes, I will!' Long afterwards I discovered that his anger had been justly caused by a lamentable occurrence at Bidford Grange. At length (it seemed an hour) he moved rapidly away; and having reassured my companions, we returned to the charge. The door was soon opened, and, tinder box in hand, we groped our way to the great chancel, and with considerable difficulty, for the letters were much worn, I singled out the slab, *then* about three feet by seven feet, which covers the remains of Shakespeare.

"Hawtin waited on the outside, to throw a list ball against the windows in case of alarm, whilst Dyer and Cull, by the dim light of two curiously contrived lanterns, began to pick out the mortar dividing that slab from Thomas Nashe's. Great care was necessary, that no trace of our search might remain.

"As the men stealthily worked, the gloomy silence was quite chilling. Several times the wood-work in the high pews went off with a bang like a gum tree; and once I could almost have sworn that I heard a rumbling in the Clopton Chapel. When the stone was raised and placed on one side, there was very little masonry beneath, chiefly a thick layer of fine brown mould, mixed with woody fibre and fragments of glass, which had been subject to the action of fire. There was evidence also of previous disturbance, for, in addition to a circular piece of metal the size of a guinea, having on one side two crowns and a fleur-de-lis, and on the other a shield bearing three trees, and the name Ashwin beneath, we turned up a thigh bone and finger joints near the surface, and afterwards several teeth, with a knot of oak and a few attenuated nails with square heads.

"But the most curious discovery was that of a ring, or fillet, probably of bronze, very much worn and indented, in which an inscription had been traced, the only legible part being, as I afterwards found, the half Roman letters, G U—L M—S (then follows a device like a sword), and a rude monogram, H. S. or I. H. S.

"The men had dug to the depth of three feet, and I now watched narrowly, for, by the clogging of the darker earth, and that peculiar humid state—smell I can hardly call it—which sextons and earth-grubbers so well understand, I knew we were nearing the level where the body had formerly mouldered.

"'No shovels but the hands,' I whispered, 'and feel for a skull.'

"There was a long pause as the fellows, sinking in the loose mould, slid their horny palms over fragments of bone. Presently, 'I got him,' said Cull; 'but he's fine and heavy.'

"Delving to the arm-pits with both hands, he tugged for some

seconds, and then brought up a huge grey stone like that with which the church is built.

"I began to be sceptical, when Tom Dyer, who was groping some two feet away from where the skull ought to have been, according to the position of the slab, came upon it, and lifted it out, diving again for the jaw.

"I handled Shakespeare's skull at last, and gazed at it only for a moment, for time was precious. It was smaller than I expected, and in formation not much like what I remembered of the effigy above our heads. At home I made a minute examination, the particulars of which, with other memoranda, were lent to Dr. Booker, of Alcester, and subsequently lost, much to my regret.

"Then my men most carefully replaced the earth and stone, ramming all interstices with fragments of old mortar brought for the purpose. This, with a liberal sprinkling of dust, plentiful in the old church at that time, effectually concealed our depredations. My men were surprised at the care which I bestowed upon the venerable article. 'Any skull from the charnel house close by,' they remarked, 'would have answered fully as well, without the labour.' 'Every man has his fancy,' I replied, 'this is mine.'

"When we reached Oversley Bridge, I gave them their money, and more; and a few hours afterwards paid for nine quarts of ale at the 'Globe,' so that they seemed well satisfied with the night's adventure.

CHAPTER III.

THE RESULT.

"My next step," continues Frank Chambers, "was to write in strict confidence to the much-talked-of Mr. Walpole, now Lord Orford. He had been lately staying with Marshal Conway during the latter's illness, at Park Place, in Oxfordshire, and my letter followed him, and was answered from Berkeley Square.

"He remembered the expression of his former keen interest in Shakespeare, politely appreciated my confidence and labours, and 'would give all the skulls of his living relatives,' so he wrote, 'to possess that of the deceased bard;' but he offered no terms. Again I wrote. He replied that he had been ill, was worn to a skeleton, and at nearly four score could not meet me in Warwickshire. Would I oblige him by coming to Strawberry Hill, and then all could be arranged.

"Believing that he was shuffling, and desirous of peeping without paying for the show, I stated my inability to comply with his request, and, reminding him of his old offer of 300 guineas for Shakespeare's skull, begged to know if he were still anxious to possess it.

"There was further delay. At length he arranged to send down a confidant to treat with me for the treasure, and late one evening in December a message was left at my rooms from a Mr. Kirgall, or

some such a name, requesting to see me at the 'Bear' Inn.' (Then comes the interview, to which reference has been made.)

"Upon entering the low-pitched room, a middle-aged man came forward, dressed in a manner antiquated even for those days. He was rather short, had weak eyes, and was deferential almost to timidity. He had been in Alcester, he said, many years before, and remembered as a lad taking down some figures with reference to a new church under the direction of his present employer and Colonel Conway; and had copied a design for a tower somewhere near. He was now sent to express his lordship's pleasure and cordial congratulations at my success in securing the veritable skull of Shakespeare. Might he be allowed to inspect?"

"I fetched it. Mr. Kirgall was in raptures. His lordship, who had kept our correspondence a profound secret, known only to two maiden ladies and the dear Duchess of Gloucester, would indeed rejoice to possess—the *loan* of it. Would I entrust it to his keeping? 'At one price,' I rejoined, eventually reducing that price considerably.

"The gentleman still dallied; and, soon seeing that his errand was merely to obtain an unconditional loan of the article, I prepared to leave the room. He sought to detain me. Did I consider the risk of having a stolen skull? The Earl did not wish to retain it for his own pleasure, but to show it to other people; 'besides,' he added, forgetting his diffidence, 'it might not be genuine.' Here I stopped him. Finding that I was firm, and further parley on Lord Orford's behalf useless, Mr. Kirgall sought to do a little business on his own account. Examining the skull and the jaw, which I had attached, he noticed that, whilst the molars had disappeared, there were several front teeth in a fair state of preservation, although loose from exposure. Might he extract one, only one? he would fee me handsomely.

"'All, or none,' I replied; and, taking up the skull, I abruptly wished him good-night.

"Putting my head out of the window early next morning to answer a call, I saw my dear friend holding the open door of the London coach opposite the 'Angel,' and peering up and down the street. Perhaps he thought I should consider the matter more favourably at the last moment. He was mistaken. The coach rattled off, and Mr. Kirgall reached Berkeley Square on the morrow, minus one parcel.

"The Reverend Samuel Parr, curate in charge of Hatton, had shown the utmost reverence for the memory of Shakespeare; and a quaint drawing of New Place, Stratford, was entrusted to his care by Mr. Colmore, of Birmingham, after the recent riots. This I saw being framed at Twamley's, in Warwick, a few days after the interview with Kirgall; and I suddenly decided, being so near Hatton, to sound the doctor about purchasing so rare a memento of his idol. My excuse must be, youth and innocence, and a scantily-furnished pocket.

"Leaving Pritchard to drive the hired gig back to Stratford, I had a brisk walk to Hatton, the moon just showing the hoar frost on the ground. Thinking that the vicarage would be handy to the church, I made my way there, but could see no house. There was a faint light from the tower, for the men were ringing to call Christmas. I well remember listening beneath the belfry window, an unusually lofty one; and presently, when they paused, one man struck up the chorus of a carol which my old uncle sang at Studley when I was a child:

'But Christmas then is Christmas now, though altered are the times,
When we sate up at midnight to hear the merry chimes.'

"In a few minutes I found myself at the back of the vicarage. 'This door will do as well as any other,' thought I; and I gave a sturdy rap. 'Come in—come in,' from a shrill voice, which I recognised, to my surprise, as the doctor's.

"Somewhat abashed at my intrusion, I entered the kitchen. There, on one side of the wide hearth, sat the little great man in a well-padded library chair, with his right leg resting on a settle, at the extreme end of which was a wiry old man, in brown velvet waistcoat and nankeen breeches and gaiters, polishing a chain, evidently the man-of-all-work. On the opposite side were seated two gaunt female servants, not the least in awe of their learned master. The visitors were, a clergyman, not known, but I think from Tamworth, and my old acquaintance, John Bartlam.

"Dr. Parr, who resembled a short-horned bull, wore a shabby skull cap, which, being much too large, now and then slipped forwards and rested on his bushy eyebrows. He had no whiskers, and the eyes were very searching. He wore a loose coat with large buttons, black breeches, and ribbed worsted stockings, with broad buckles to his shoes. He looked what he desired to be—the old-fashioned country parson.

"Laying down his pipe, he greeted me somewhat stiffly, but offered a bed. Waiting until the servants and the Tamworth visitor had retired, leaving the doctor and Mr. Bartlam over their grog, I ventured to hint at the object of my visit. Recalling a former conversation, I cautiously felt my way. If such an article could be procured, would Dr. Parr like to possess Shakespeare's skull? 'How could he possess it?' he interposed, testily; 'it was in the grave, if anywhere.'

"I continued: 'If you, sir, would make it worth the risk, I happen to know ——'

"'Know what?' he shouted. 'Has that fellow Garrick left it to his wife? He declared he would steal it at the jubilee.'

"'Oh, no!' I rejoined; 'it is there—that is ——' (with hesitation).

"'Well then, sir, there let it be' (rolling out pompously). "'And curst be he that moves my bones.'" Afterwards he added, severely,

‘Jack Bartlam, I would have any man whipt at the cart’s tail who violated the sanctity of that grave : it would be worse than Malone or sacrilege.’

“Seeing that I was utterly mistaken in my man, I changed the subject, and was relieved to get off to bed.

“In the morning, as I was leaving, Mr. Bartlam walked a little way with me. He said : ‘Chambers, you have that skull !’ There was something about John Bartlam which forbade subterfuge. He was genial and kind, and, withal, loved a joke ; so I told him. He became, however, very grave during the recital, and blamed me somewhat harshly, I then thought. He made me solemnly promise that the skull should be restored ; and I (cursing my ill-luck more than my folly) walked on to Teddy Easthorpe’s, at Stratford, who drove me home.”

“I repeatedly pressed my uncle,” writes the late Mr. M., “to tell me whether the skull was ever really restored, and gleaned from him the following particulars.

“After waiting for the waning of that month’s moon, he had arranged with Tom Dyer to replace it one night in January, but was obliged to accompany his employer to Mr. Wilks’s, at Coughton, to a case of compound fracture, whereupon Master Tom declared he could manage it all by himself, as he knew a way of getting into the church through the bone-house. The next day Dyer was paid, after taking an oath that he had buried the skull and made it all square, leaving no trace.

“On the following Sunday afternoon my uncle attended service at Stratford church, on purpose to inspect the slab. There were no marks of a second upheaval, but there was an ominous crack right across the slab, about two feet from the end near the communion rails, and this might not long escape observation. To see Dyer was my uncle’s first impulse, and he sought him early the next morning. He had gone to do some repairs at Welford Mill ; and, later in the day, my uncle, after calling upon a cousin (at Clifford, I believe), traced Dyer to the little front parlour of the ‘Four Alls,’ near the bridge crossing the Avon.

“Tom, who was alone and drinking like a fish, at first protested that there was nothing up with the stone. After considerable evasion, he admitted that it was ‘a mighty dale heavier than he thought : that he had just lifted one end half an inch or so when it began to snap ; and to prevent further mischief he laid it down again.’

“‘You rascal ! then you never buried that skull !’

“Tom declared, however, that the old chap was there beneath, as safe as a door nail.

“Again I asked my uncle, ‘Do you think that the skull was ever really restored ?’ He was silent for a minute, and then quoted its owner for about the first time in his life :

“‘Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.’”

THE MYSTERY OF DR. HARDY'S MARRIAGE.

BY ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO.

IT was a standard question in Dinnent—Why had Dr. Hardy married Miss Ray? Even when that lady had been Mrs. Hardy for some years, the old puzzle would serve to quicken Dinnent conversation when it flagged, or to point the moral of the general uncertainty of human actions.*

There was no such terrible disparity between the worldly circumstances of the couple. Both belonged to respectable Dinnent families. Perhaps the Hardys had been the more respected, but the Rays were held to be the better off, a belief which Miss Lydia Ray's astonishing marriage had tended to confirm. Old Mr. Ray was thought to be a miser, perhaps on the theory that nobody but a rich man could look poor so frankly. The Rays had mixed little in Dinnent society, only giving a stiff tea-party now and then. Mrs. Ray had been long dead, and the family consisted of the old gentleman and three daughters, the youngest of whom, Lydia, became the fortunate Mrs. Hardy. The Rays' house was called Briar Cottage; and there were no flowers in its garden and very few ornaments in its rooms. The Misses Ray had always dressed with an artificial and elaborate primness, and the two elder sisters were dry and stiff in manner, as if the over-forward advances of the world needed much repelling.

The Hardy family had been of quite another stamp. They lived in the Red House, and every little urchin in Dinnent knew the Red House and its ways, and its abundant jams and sweeties. There had been rather "hard lines" there in Dr. Hardy's boyhood, for his father had died suddenly, and left his widow very poorly provided for. But she got through somehow, and was still seated in the chimney corner—a jolly old lady, who received her daughter-in-law without wincing, and who, if she shared Dinnent's wonder at the match, never allowed Dinnent to know it.

Dr. Hardy himself had been a popular character from his very cradle. He was thoroughly good-hearted and well-meaning, and yet he had certain weaknesses and foibles which got him into scrapes, and saved him from the spite which is too often the lot of a strong and militant virtue.

He was a curious mixture of activity and indolence. Perhaps he may be described as physically active and mentally lazy. It was easy for him to perform feats of strength and endurance—to ride twenty miles at midnight to see a sick child; to spend night after night beside sick-beds instead of in his own. But it had never been easy for Edward Hardy to make up his mind, and then stick to it.

Perhaps some of Dr. Hardy's popularity was due to the fact that it was by no means easy for him to run counter to anybody while he was in that person's presence. Silence was his utmost dissent, and rarely indeed was that unaccompanied by a smile or a dubious gesture.

But these trifles were not likely to detract from his importance, when he turned his back on colleges and hospitals, and settled down in Dinnent, a clever young medical man, bright in face and kindly in manner, with pleasant family traditions behind him and good financial prospects before.

Whom would he marry? had then been Dinnent's question regarding him. Laura Devine, the Mayor's daughter, had been suggested. Laura's beauty had a consumptive cast, and the young doctor was often at the Mayor's house. Some people said a doctor would be too wise to marry a sickly woman, but others remarked that it was a proverb that nobody went so ill-shod as the shoemaker's wife. Others, again, suggested one of the daughters of Mrs. Rowe, the widow of the last vicar. The doctor went there often too, and that must be quite non-professionally, for Rose and Sarah Rowe were as sturdy as the hawthorn trees, and their mother was constantly boasting that nobody who had a good constitution and common sense needed to trouble a doctor at all. In fact, Rose and Sarah sometimes wished that their mother would not be so loud in these proclamations. They feared they might hurt Dr. Hardy's feelings, and could scarcely believe in the sincerity with which he endorsed them.

Though these three young ladies carried off the palm of probability, almost every other girl in Dinnent was casually contemplated in the same light. Even the poor orphan, Lucy Craven, who served in the Dinnent bookseller's shop, was suspected of having "upsetting ideas," and of being just the girl (well, her gown was very black and her face was very white!) "to bewitch a fine young fellow with more chivalry than knowledge of the world."

But nobody—no, not deep old Mrs. Simeon, at the Gate House, nor sharp Miss Rutter, of the Grange, ever thought of Lydia Ray.

The oversight was not wonderful. Dinnent had seen the three sisters coming in and going out for nearly forty years, always dressed alike, always prim, precise, and proper. If anybody had thought of Lydia, they must have also thought of Miss Eliza and Miss Jane. Only quite elderly people knew exactly which were the elder of the three, for between thirty-two and forty there is not always a very striking difference of appearance. But one must draw a line somewhere, and considering that Dr. Hardy was not much more than seven-and-twenty, the Dinnent ladies thought they drew the line among themselves wide enough when they drew it from sixteen to thirty. If you were to draw a line wider than that, where were you to stop?

Nobody felt any suspicion, even when Lydia Ray sickened, and Dr. Hardy was summoned to attend her. It was not his first introduction to Briar Cottage, for Lydia's sickness grew out of a dangerous illness of her father's. The Rays did not call in a doctor for slight occasions. They made no such boast as Mrs. Rowe's, and indeed that valiant matron would probably have said that there was not a good constitution or a grain of common sense among the lot. But they had their little dietings and dosings, and never dreamed of a doctor until the vision of an undertaker loomed not very far behind him.

Old Mr. Ray really had "a very bad turn," as the old ladies called it. He lost the use of his limbs and he wandered in his mind, and for a long time it was very doubtful whether strength or consciousness would ever return. Dinnent pressed all sorts of help on Briar Cottage, for Dinnent was not an unkindly place, though it loved to serve with its right hand that its left hand might know what it had done. But the pale ladies of Briar Cottage put aside all proffers of succour. In those days enquirers always saw Miss Eliza, or Miss Jane. They said that Miss Lydia was the nurse, and Miss Jane was apt to add, rather sarcastically, that "Lydia thought nobody was any use but herself."

"And if she's any use at all, 'she's right in her opinion of the others," said candid Mrs. Rowe.

But old Mr. Ray rallied, though slowly, and proved a very troublesome convalescent. Briar Cottage returned to its accustomed ways, except that Miss Eliza and Miss Jane took their walks alone, and had their meals together in the faded dining-room, sending portions upstairs for the invalid and the nurse. They felt that Lydia had put them aside when "there was really something to be done," and it never occurred to their peevish pride to offer to relieve her now, when all danger was past. So, worn out with anxiety and watching, Lydia spent day after day in a close and heated atmosphere, driven to her wits' end by the ceaseless worrying of a narrow and embittered nature, and pained and chilled by the coolness and implied disapprobation of her sisters.

All this while she and the young doctor had scarcely exchanged twenty unnecessary words. Lydia herself had a friendly heart, but it had lived among unfriendly natures. She thought that Eliza and Jane felt as she did, and she believed it was right, and indeed necessary, that she should act as they did, and draw back and keep aloof from any kindly contact with one's fellow creatures. Not that she could ever do it from the same motives, for Eliza and Jane did it from an innate sense of superiority, while she was deeply impressed with her own unworthiness. Though a casual observer might have found it hard to distinguish one of the "three old maids" from the others, Lydia Ray was quite of a different nature from Eliza and Jane. She must have resembled their mother, who had been dead

so long that none of her daughters remembered her. But this difference only made her the more subject to the family will and tradition. Eliza and Jane differed, wrangled, and were far more independent of each other than was Lydia of either of them. They were at bottom in sympathy: they made their own atmosphere, and throve in it, to the limited extent of the thriving power which was in them. Lydia was simply repressed. Like a withering plant in a dark closet, her real life was shut up within herself, while externally she reflected as a mirror the forms of those about her.

Had Lydia Ray ever left Briar Cottage and gone out alone for a single month, it is not likely that on her return she would have succumbed so utterly. But Briar Cottage represented her world, and if anything within her found no response there, she had no idea, no hope that it might find response elsewhere. Few men can realise the existence of such women. They pass about the world, they look contented, often cheerful, they seem well provided. In reality, they are creatures who have never found their element; though, less fortunate than fishes, they can go on living without it.

Lydia had had her young dreams of friendship—even of love. She knew her sisters would call these foolish, and she innocently accepted their verdict. She looked with her gentle, wistful eyes into other people's households, and wished that Eliza or Jane had found somebody good enough to marry, so that she might have been god-mother to their children, and helped with their bringing up. She had not courage to have a dream husband and dream babies of her own: she had only a dream brother-in-law and dream nephews and nieces.

And all these years the wolf of poverty had been drawing nearer and nearer to the shabby porch of Briar Cottage. Little house-properties lost in value; one or two investments stopped their dividends altogether; Eliza and Jane grew only sharper and sourer, and condemned the little luxuries they were obliged to cut off. It was under a blow of this sort that old Mr. Ray had sickened.

Then, for the first time, Lydia had been obliged to oppose herself to her sisters. She had no will of her own to do it. It was the sick man himself who drove the others from his room, saying that their voices went through his head, that their hands were cold, and their attentions worrying. He had never before preferred Lydia—of his three children perhaps she had been the least favoured hitherto. Eliza and Jane withdrew affronted. Each shed some bitter tears apart, and then by common consent, but without one spoken word, they henceforth implied that Lydia had arrogated to herself the post of nurse, and that they only hoped she had sense and strength to do her duty to their poor dear father.

While their father's illness continued at its height, Lydia believed that her sisters' asperity was due to their anxiety about him, and to their very natural doubts of her skill and ability. But during his

recovery it slowly dawned upon her that a gulf had suddenly opened in the dry soil of the family life, and that she was left standing alone on one side of it. For as he regained strength, her father's preference for her vanished, and he openly chafed at the "other girls" leaving him so much to her society, as, with a malicious dutifulness, they persisted in doing, except when expressly commanded to the contrary.

It was not much that Lydia had lost, for it was little that she had ever had. But it seemed a great deal to her, and it was her all. Nobody knew that she suffered; probably she did not know herself: she was too humble to think that anything she could feel could be worthy the name of pain. But day after day the stairs grew more wearisome, and the furniture heavier, and the food less appetising. And one evening a strange mist hung over everything—indoors as well as out-of-doors. And next morning she could not lift her head from her pillow, and Dr. Hardy had a new patient.

Dr. Hardy understood the situation very fairly, as doctors often do. He had had his colloquies with Eliza and Jane. Even now they were not slow to lay Lydia's illness at her own door. "She would not let them take their fair share of their father's illness, and now she had come upon them herself." He wanted them to hire a trained nurse to wait on their sister; and fearing lest their pride might resent and resist any supposed slight on their own powers, he slyly urged that the train of illness was likely to lengthen out if all the care were cast on delicate and sensitive relatives. That did not gain his end, but it mollified the ladies. Had Lydia been conscious, she might have wondered at the effect produced by so slight a compliment from one of that sex which her sisters despised so heartily!

Lydia's illness was that sort of low fever which lingers long and often leaves deep traces behind it. Eliza and Jane never quite believed in it. They thought Lydia did not bear up well. When she was worse they chid her; when she was better they exhorted her. They would read aloud to her; and if she asked them to stop, they felt so injured that it was easier to let them go on, at any cost of confused brain and bewildered dream.

Dr. Hardy grew to pity the pale, quiet woman, who seemed to watch for his coming, because he brought the comfort of a comprehending and sympathetic presence. She interested him as the first revelation of the sad subjection which underlies so many women's lives. Its result he had often seen before: the secret of its process had not hitherto been displayed to him. But he felt little more than a pathological interest, with a genuine healer's instinct to relieve. Not only was she thirty-six, and wan and faded, but her mind was as little likely to fascinate him as her face. It had been starved on the direst and poorest nutriment, and her sympathies, like the limbs of a man long fettered to a seat, were now scarcely able to stir themselves.

Dr. Hardy was twenty-seven, his whole nature throbbing with the ambitions and visions of an ardent, warm-hearted young man who does not even dream that anything in the world or in himself can hinder or check the strong tide of energy he feels within him. It was simply because he was so glorying in the race of life before him that this poor thing, who had never left the starting-point, touched his heart and craved from him a little help, which at its utmost could be so small.

He brought her books to beguile her convalescence. He could easily see where she stood intellectually, and he did not startle her by presenting too violently-opposed mental standpoints, nor shock her by requiring too far a leap from her accustomed ground. It might have astounded Edward Hardy had he guessed how difficult it would have been for anything from him to startle or shock her. Accustomed all her life to unquestioning loyalty to her standards, she had now made him one of them. Under cover of his medical authority had grown up another. She began to make an unconscious reference to his opinion on all subjects. It was a formidable rival, even to that of Eliza and Jane.

As she recovered, one wretched trace of her illness did not yield. In its course, she had grown deaf; and this deafness continued, though, like most nervous affections, it varied much in intensity. This troubled her sadly, because she saw it troubled others, who did not disguise that they found it troublesome. Jane wore a wrap round her throat because she "had strained it, shouting at Lydia." Lydia's recovery was visibly retarded when she found the deafness did not go. In her heart she wished she had died, and then shed sorrowful tears over her wicked rebellion. She clung more and more to Dr. Hardy's daily visits. He did not seem to blame her for her suffering. After he had been with her for a few minutes, she could hear his voice more readily than the others, though on his first coming in, she was always at her worst, since any excitement, painful or pleasing, served to increase the affliction.

Still she gradually progressed, and she said to herself that Dr. Hardy would very soon discontinue his visits. (She had already overheard Eliza and Jane discussing their cost, and she felt a pang of self-reproach that she had pleasure in what involved the expenditure of their scanty means.) No further thought was in that simple, unworldly mind. There had been grey days before—there was a gleam of sunshine now—and then there would be grey days again, just a little darker. She hoped that perhaps Dr. Hardy might oftener than before find his way to Briar Cottage as a friendly visitor. After his long professional attendance, even Eliza and Jane might think him privileged to dispense with a formal invitation.

It was a glorious summer afternoon. On Dinnent High Street, the sun had poured mightily, and there the air was close, and a little thickened by dust. But on the moorland roads around a

breeze would be blowing, and past snug old farms those roads would dip through leafy hollows, where even noontide had not scorched. Dr. Hardy, leisurely driving out, behind his sturdy pony, thought on these things, and how, at the very moment, Lydia Ray was probably tottering round her narrow weedy garden, hearing just enough to catch some of her sisters' sharpest words. Why should not he volunteer to give his patient a drive? He was going some miles by a lovely route to visit a case in which there was no fear of infection. Dr. Hardy was never slow to carry out an idea, when there was nobody to oppose it. He pulled up his pony before the gate of Briar Cottage. And there sure enough was Lydia, seated on a garden-chair, quite alone, looking very pale and draggled.

Dr. Hardy had to repeat his invitation twice before she caught his meaning, and then her face lit with intense pleasure. Such a thing was so unprecedented so outside the usual range of Eliza and Jane's opinions, that she actually forgot all about them, and accepted it without any reference to them. The very idea seemed to bring back her youth. A long, long drive over the moors gave a sense of boundless freedom to one whose peregrinations had for years been limited to the shops, the church, and the neighbouring villas. She assured Dr. Hardy that her preparation should not detain him five minutes, and left him in the garden, smiling indeed, yet half sad to think that so small a pleasure seemed to be worth so much.

But Lydia remembered Eliza and Jane, and trembled when, on her way to her own room, she had to pass those ladies seated at the window, working. She paused timidly, and said that Dr. Hardy had offered to take her for a drive; he thought it would do her good, and so did she.

Eliza said "Humph." Jane remarked, "You are quite your own mistress, Lydia. But all Dinnent will say you are trying to delude that youth into marrying you."

"Surely Dinnent can never be so foolish," answered Lydia, opening her eyes wide at a suggestion so entirely new to her own mind. "Well, I can't say I will not go, now I have said I will." And secretly she was very glad that for once she had made a decision before asking advice.

She left the door open between the rooms while she dressed, and Eliza, watching her drily, remarked, "The ride won't do you any the more good, Lydia, for your putting on your best bonnet. This afternoon, between sun and dust, will do it more damage than three months' ordinary wear."

"Never mind, it has been saved for three months during my illness," Lydia answered, and resolutely tied her strings. It was not a very expensive bonnet, nor a very smart one, for straw and ribbons were alike of a very modest brown, except where a single blue bow adorned the cap, which was the fashion of those days. Lydia had scarcely put it on before, and as she looked in the mirror she thought

it was more becoming than most of her bonnets. Perhaps it was the flush and excitement of her pleasure which did it justice.

In her harmless happiness her gentle heart wanted to be in peace and love with everybody, and as she passed her sisters she kissed first Jane and then Eliza, only winning from the former the sardonic response,

"I don't suppose you are going away for ever, Lydia."

But when she rejoined Dr. Hardy there was a restraint in her manner which would not have been there but for her sister's words. The more foolish and uncalled for she felt they were, the more they hurt her, and underneath their petty worry there stirred a strange pang which she could not comprehend, a sense of too-lateness and of irrevocable years. But she bravely set herself to drink the cup of simple pleasure which was offered to her, albeit there was a taste of wormwood on its brim. And summer skies, and yellow gorse and leafy dingles keep spells of their own, even for a kept-down old maiden, so long as her heart is not bitter, nor her eyes turned inward. And as they drove swiftly through the freshening breezes, Lydia felt quite contented and very thankful for many things.

Edward Hardy remembered that her deafness would be probably increased, for the time, by the unwonted scenes and motion, to say nothing of the rattle of the wheels. And like a true doctor, he resolved to do nothing to call her attention to her affliction, but to leave her to take her own pleasure in her own quiet way. Every now and then he glanced at the soft blue eyes gazing so eagerly around, and presently he smiled to hear that, quite unconsciously, she was crooning an old song. While he visited his patient, she dutifully held his horse for him, and when he came out, and saw the reviving vigour of her pose, and the faint rose on her thin cheek, he said to himself that the springs of our neighbour's life and health may often lie among little thoughtfulnesses and kindnesses which we too often forget or neglect.

"Poor thing," he thought, "if I may prescribe quinine for her, why may I not do this?" And then he added, aloud, "Miss Lydia, will you like to take another drive with me to-morrow?"

She started, and flushed deeply, and did not answer for a moment. Dr. Hardy made a mental note: "More nervous than I thought she was." Her voice sounded full of tears, as she replied—

"You cannot mean it."

"Indeed I do," he returned.

"Oh, Dr. Hardy!" she said, "how can I answer such a question like this?"

"Why not?" asked the young man, quite feelingly, for he was shocked at what seemed to be such a fatal sign of exhaustion and feebleness. "Why not? It concerns nobody but you and me?"

"But I am so old and so stupid," she said. "I should think you were mocking me, but I know you are too good to do that."

"She has stayed at home, and been scolded, until her brain is softening," reflected the doctor; "but I certainly never saw any signs of this before. Why, there is nothing to make a fuss about!" he cried cheerily; "just yes or no, and the matter is settled."

"Then 'yes,'" she said, adding, with a sudden burst of tears, "it ought to be 'no' for your sake, for it is not fair to you."

"Why, Miss Ray," went on the doctor, pretending not to notice her agitation, "the very chaise is made for two, and I don't believe the pony knows you are here to-day."

"What will Eliza and Jane say?" she asked, presently, in a very subdued voice.

"Hang Eliza and Jane!" said Dr. Hardy.

"And your mother?" she suggested, timidly.

The doctor burst into a hearty laugh, and rejoined: "The dear old mammy does not mind what else I do, so long as I keep a little of my charming society for herself."

"And of course you will give her as much of that as ever," said Lydia, "and indeed I hope I may be some little comfort to her myself."

"What a sentimental way of putting things women have," thought the doctor. "That's a hint that she would like to come to our house a little. I don't wonder at it; the dear old mammy and her knitting-needles are quite lively dissipation compared with those dreadful Fates and their everlasting embroidery."

"Well, I never expected this; it never occurred to me that such a thing was possible," said Lydia gently, as to herself.

"I don't quite see why she need have expected it," thought Dr. Hardy, glancing down at her, and thinking how bright and hopeful she looked, and marvelling how one short drive could have wrought such a change in a woman's face.

"I have heard some say that they felt when this was coming," she went on softly. "I'm glad I didn't, or I should have been frightened, and then it might never have happened. But, oh," she said, looking up, with a pain flitting across her forehead, "now the people will think they have every right to say what Jane said they would."

"And in the name of wonder what was that?" asked the doctor, pulling at his reins, and not profoundly interested, though he feigned a civil curiosity.

"She said they would say I was trying to delude you into marrying me," answered Lydia. "I'm sure I did not. I'm sure you, at least, know that I did nothing to make you ask me so suddenly."

Dr. Hardy's heart jumped and pounded heavily against his side. He saw it all now. His simple question, "Will you like to take another drive with me to-morrow?" had been heard as "Will you let me take you to be my wife for ever?" or words to the like effect. The offer he had never made was accepted, and he was an engaged man against his will. What could he do? A word would set it

right—would drive away the strange sunshine that was beginning to palely glimmer over that barren life—aye, and send that poor heart back to its hopeless imprisonment with a new stamp of shame and wrong upon it. And Dinnent was already in sight. And here were Mrs. Rowe and her two daughters walking towards them up the hill!

That buxom matron hailed them with a loud and hearty greeting—was glad to see the invalid looking so well, and hoped Dr. Hardy was not over-working himself.

“And upon my word, Miss Ray,” went on the vicar’s widow, accustomed to plan and control, “now we’ve met you, I think we may as well go back with you to Briar Cottage, for I want to ask your father a question about my life insurance. If you can get down here I’ll take charge of you to your home. You can lean on me as much as you like; and that will spare Dr. Hardy driving out of his way to set you down at your gate; for I’m sure he looks as if he needed his tea!”

“Won’t you come home with me now?” said Lydia, rather piteously, to the doctor, as he instantly prepared to alight. She knew nothing of the ways and manners of lovers, so that she was not hurt by his alacrity in parting from her. But she felt frightened to meet her father and sisters, to whom she felt it was her bounden duty at once to announce the strange and momentous change in her existence.

“I’ll come in this evening,” he said huskily, “in about an hour’s time.” It seemed impossible to break the truth to her here and now: it would be easier when she was resting on her own little couch in her own shady parlour.

He hurried on to his own home. His stable-boy wondered what was the matter with him when he flung him the reins without his usual word and joke. His mother was out, had gone to take tea with a neighbour; and the surgery was full of people—tedious, worrying people, with chronic neuralgias and indigestion. Dr. Hardy could find neither the sympathetic society which soothes nor the solitude which strengthens; yet, had his mother been at home, he doubted if he could have told her of his dilemma, its ludicrousness was so patent, its pathos was so subtle. She would certainly have laughed, and somehow a laugh would have jarred him. And he fancied she might have made some severe remarks on Lydia Ray, and they would have jarred him still more. Besides, he had no right to share this trial with anybody. He and Lydia must get through it by themselves. Women must forgive him that he did not remember this at once. It only escaped his mind, because, being a man, he did not fully realise how disgraceful it is for a woman to be ready to fall in love!

He dismissed the last grumbling old woman from the surgery, hastily swallowed a cup of tea, and then set off to Briar Cottage. He

would not give himself time to think. "The best operations are often done impromptu," he said to himself.

As he turned into the lane where the Cottage stood, there was Mrs. Rowe, not a hundred yards from its gate, in full conversation with the greatest gossip in Dinnent, and both were laughing heartily. "Was it possible?"—but no, he would not believe it, and pushed forward manfully, intending to pass the ladies with a wave of his hat and a brief "good evening." But they both held out their hands to him.

"Let us wish you joy, doctor," cried Mrs. Rowe, in a voice strong enough to reach Mrs. Simeon, who was watering the flowers in her garden hard by. "Let us wish you joy. But you have given us a turn, for all that. You've put us quite on a wrong scent! And to see how grave you looked this afternoon, as if all the poor sick babies and grandmothers were weighing on your mind! But why did you let me separate you? I've had a courting time myself, doctor, and I have feelings. Poor thing! I noticed she was trembling like a leaf; and when I led her in, I said to Eliza, 'Take her away to lie down awhile.' And in five minutes' time Eliza came down and told us all the news."

Now, what could Dr. Hardy do? Could he tell Lydia's blunder to these two amused women, before she even knew it herself? Perhaps he could scarcely do better than he did, which was to say quietly,

"Thank you, ladies; I am sure you will excuse me from any delay."

"Oh, certainly," they both said. And he felt they turned and watched him as he went on.

"That's not love," observed the gossip. "He's thinking of old Ray's money. Perhaps he's in some difficulty—one never knows."

"Poor fellow!" said Mrs. Rowe. "He doesn't know what he's doing. Money may pay for the coals, but it does not warm a hearth, for all that."

When the little servant of Briar Cottage opened the door, he saw she knew all about it. Jane met him in the hall, and she intended her words to be cordial, but her tone was acid as she said,

"Well, Dr. Hardy, we never expected this!"

Again he could not bring himself to respond "Neither did I." He had a vision of Lydia, lonely, weeping, utterly humiliated beneath the scoffs and jeers of these two cold, hard sisters. He even had a vision of a new name on the Ray tombstone in Dinnent churchyard. He was a soft-hearted fellow. And he was not vain. It was not from any sense of his own value that he estimated Lydia's loss, but from his knowledge of her poor cabined life.

"I should have thought Lydia would not like to have such a young lover," said Eliza. "It almost looks as if she could not be appreciated by her contemporaries. Poor dear Lydia, she never did

seem to be very attractive. I always wondered at it, for she never seemed hard to please. But perhaps that was the explanation. Would not you like to go upstairs to see her, Dr. Hardy? I told her she had better not leave her own room again to-night. This sort of thing is so new to her that it has quite upset her."

Walking like a man in a dream, Dr. Hardy found his way to the well-known room. Was this where he had coolly felt pulses, and lightly talked small talk? Yes; there was the familiar row of devotional books, and the little work-basket with the red lining. And there was Lydia herself, with tearful eyes and outstretched hands, exclaiming,

"Oh, Dr. Hardy, Jane and Eliza are so angry, and I don't know what to do! They say you can't understand what you are about. Am I really so hateful that it is ridiculous for anybody to—like me?"

"My dear Miss Lydia, you are very sweet and lovable," said the doctor, soothingly.

"And Jane made me tell her everything—and she said there was nothing natural about it," sobbed Lydia, adding, with a faint spurt of feminine malice, "I can't think how Jane knows!"

Dr. Hardy stood astounded. He knew that the pitiful appeal, and the little family revelations were quite what might be expected under the circumstances which Lydia believed in; but under those which he knew, they seemed terrible and shocking.

"Please, sir," said the little servant, opening the door, "master says will you come to him in his room; he wants to speak with you."

"Now for it!" thought Dr. Hardy. "Now I'll make it right somehow. I'll get a chance of explaining, or perhaps the old gentleman will take the papa's usual part and raise objections, and I'll accept them, and get out of it without hurting the poor thing's feelings."

But what was his horror, when the grim old man, miser by repute, and cynic and misanthrope by profession, advanced towards him with tearful eye and trembling lips, and said, eagerly:

"Sir, I honour you. From any other man, I should have suspected this offer was made with a view to the fortune with which Dinnent credits us. But you have known the secrets of our prison-house. And you have had a heart pure enough to be attracted by Liddy's filial devotion and sisterly patience, although the first bloom of her youth is past, and gibing girls, whom most fools think so angelic, would scorn her as half an old maid. Sir, you have given me back some of my lost faith in human nature. And you have relieved a father's heart, and a proud heart, sir, that would rather be deemed a miser than be counted poor. That's because Daniel Ray knows the world, sir. The other girls won't be a burden to you; there's enough for them: but it's sometimes troublesome to get at, Dr. Hardy—troublesome to get at, and it's a relief to my mind that they'll have a man to look to them, and keep them from making their poor little money matters a laughing-stock in Dinnent. Many

a time did I say to my poor wife, when she was lying, slowly dying, 'What am I to do with three helpless girls?' And she used to say, 'Daniel, there will be ways opened before you.' She had always faith in God, my dear wife had, and Lydia takes after her, and I'm beginning to think there's something in it after all."

Could Dr. Hardy open his mouth, and with one sentence destroy the old man's new-found faith in him, in human nature, and in God? Dr. Hardy could not. Nothing fought on his side. He was fancy free. Not only had Lydia no living rival—she had not even an ideal one. The young man had had his passing attractions; but he had never yet seen a woman whom for three whole months together he had desired to be his wife. And he let old Mr. Ray take his arm and lead him back to Lydia's room, and when the feeble, aged hands joined Lydia's and his, and folded softly over them, then in her father's presence the young man bowed his head and solemnly kissed the drooping forehead of the trembling woman. He did it, as in a dream, and yet, as in some dreams, he felt a weight about his heart, and a sense that something had gone wrong, which could never be set right.

"I hope Jane noticed he kissed me now," mused Lydia. For that had been one of Jane's tart questions after the revelation on the return from the ride. When Lydia had modestly answered "No," Jane had laughed so mockingly, that Lydia, roused, had reminded her that they had been only on the moor under the open eye of Heaven; and Jane had returned that she knew well enough that those who wished could easily give a kiss and take a kiss on Dinnet Moor. Lydia wondered at Jane, and wondered what else Jane might know, and now she hoped that Jane would notice that her lover had paid her the due attention, so that his previous reticence had been evidently but the most delicate chivalry.

On his return home, Dr. Hardy found his mother seated at her knitting beside the fire, for one was always lit for her in the evening, summer or winter. He sat down beside her, but he did not much respond to her cheery chatter. He rose to retire before she did; and gave her his usual good-night without adding another word. But when she went to her own room, she found a slip of paper on her toilet table.

"Dearie me!" she cried, fumbling for her spectacles, "this is an old trick of his. This is what he always did when he wanted a new cricket set, or leave to go botanising! He has not done it since those days, and what can he want now, that he can't get without my leave? What does it say?"

"Dear mother," she read, "I am engaged to marry Miss Lydia Ray. I am sure she is a good woman, and I hope she will make you a kind daughter.—Your loving son, Edward."

"Well—to—be—sure!"

The old lady took off her spectacles and sat down. She had often

looked forward to this occasion, and all the possible circumstances she had foreseen had been different from the reality—except one condition, which, as it rested with herself, was in her own hands. This was, that her first duty would be to remember that Edward must marry to please himself, and that she must look at his wife through his eyes.

“And, indeed,” she said, with a pathetic laugh, “I’ve hardly got to try to do that, for it really seems as if Edward, in his choice, had looked through my eyes instead of his own. There’s no denying that Lydia Ray will be a pleasanter daughter-in-law to me than ninety-nine out of a hundred. She won’t want everything changed and chopped about. I have known what that loud-talking Mrs. Rowe has had in her mind, when she has come here and looked about, and said, ‘If this was my house I should do so and so, and have such and such.’ Still, my boy did seem worthy of all that is sweetest and best in womankind. And why should I seem to imply that Lydia Ray is less than that? Perhaps the angels see a younger heart in her than in many a red-cheeked girl. If only—but ‘if’ is a little word that can be slipped in in most places. And so I’ll go and kiss my boy; I’ll not tell him that Lydia Ray has set a trap and caught him, for that is only what I always felt I did myself with his dear father; but I’ll tell him that what pleases him pleases me, and that it seems in this matter as if what pleases me pleases him.”

The dear old woman left her candle outside her son’s door. He took her kind words very quietly, and put up his hand and gently squeezed the fingers she passed tenderly over his hair. But when she was gone, he turned his face to the wall, and who shall say if, in the darkness, there came a few hot tears? With his own hand he thus put away for ever all that most men call the romance of existence. He had thought to do a slight kindness, and the sacrifice of a lifetime had fallen upon him. It must fall now, on him or on Lydia. He was the stronger; he had had most happiness hitherto. Even this would not blight his life so thoroughly as her life would be blighted otherwise. And she was a good woman, and might have been so pretty and attractive if she had had a fair chance! If men, on all hands, regardless of the highest happiness of the heart, married for money, for connection, for comfort, was he not free to surrender his to save from humiliation, and to give peace and joy to, a patient creature, who had lived so long and so well without them?

It was a heroism which grew out of a weakness. But more heroisms do that than we always care to fancy. We all do wrong, for we are all, as simple folks say, “mortal.” But some of us choose to suffer as far as we can for our own errors, rather than to inflict that suffering on others, even on those whose own mistakes may have originated our errors.

That very night Dr. Edward Hardy took up his cross, none the less a cross because it showed to others as grotesque.

And this is the story which answers the standard Dinnent question, "Why did Dr. Hardy marry Miss Ray?"

But only the other day, when that was asked in the hearing of a stranger, that stranger answered, "Why?—because she's the pleasantest woman in the place, of course, and her three children are the nicest and handsomest in all Dinnent." Her deafness gradually lessened until it is nothing at all, or only something which gives her a winning way of waiting on one's words. One thing is very certain, that while other women have grown older, Lydia Hardy has grown younger. Some people say we are all young once, and, perhaps, if we miss our youth at one end of our life we get it at the other. As for the doctor, when he married he certainly did grow very sober and staid, which was good for him professionally, as some people had hardly liked to trust him before. But after a while, perhaps when his responsibilities weighed less upon him—perhaps when he felt his reputation was quite established, he gradually returned to his own self and his own old merry ways. To look at him, one would say that bearing a cross was not unwholesome exercise. It is a very curious thing that when anything is said in their presence about proposals of marriage, Dr. and Mrs. Hardy have been seen to look at each other and to smile very significantly. How much can she know? Is it possible that he has told her all, because at last he can end the story by saying heartily, "And if it was to do again, wifie, I hope you'd do the same"?



HOW GEORGETTE KEPT TRYST.

BY M. E. PENN.

IT was a fête day at Versailles, and the palace and grounds were crowded with holiday-makers from Paris. A golden September afternoon was waning to its close. The autumn sunshine, low, but clear, lay in long shafts of light across the quaint and formal gardens, and glittered in the spray of innumerable fountains, tossing, falling, splashing, sparkling, on every side. The air was full of the laughing, liquid sound.

The crowd had gathered thickly round the Grandes Eaux, that is, the giant jets in the "Basin of Neptune," and "Apollo," leaving the remoter parts of the grounds comparatively deserted. In one of the loneliest of the green and shady allées a young couple were slowly sauntering. The girl, who was dressed with the dainty neatness characteristic of a Parisian ouvrière of the better class, had taken off her hat, in order to decorate it with a spray of ivy, while her companion held her parasol, and watched her in admiring silence.

The sunshine touched her wavy brown hair with gleams of gold, and brought a tinge of rose to the delicate pallor of her face; a face which, in repose, had a look of patient melancholy, as if already life's shadows had fallen upon it. But when, glancing up from her task, she met her lover's eyes, it brightened all over with a smile so sudden and sweet that he was dazzled.

"Georgette, how lovely you are!" The remark seemed to escape him involuntarily.

"It is my hat, not my face, you are to admire, if you please," she returned, with a demure little glance at him, as she put it on again. "Look, doesn't the ivy make a pretty trimming?"

"Charming; the frame is worthy of the picture. Suppose we sit down on the grass here for a few moments, that I may admire it at my leisure?"

"Yes, let us. I am so fond of this place," she responded.

It was a narrow walk, shut in by trees and quaint clipped hedges, with grass underfoot, and leaves overhead, green, shady, solitary. Near where they sat was a little fountain, and the statue of a water-nymph, in a mossy marble basin. The murmur of the crowd reached them vaguely, mingled with the rushing of water, and the music of a distant band.

"You love this spot? so do I," said the young man, as he stretched himself on the grass at her side. "It was in this very avenue, my darling, when these leaves were young, that you spoke the three sweet words which made me the happiest man in France."

"Did it really make you happy to know that I loved you, Etienne?"

I am so glad," the girl replied, letting her hand rest for a moment on his dark curls. "But my love can never be to you, dear, what yours is to me, because you have never known what it is to be utterly alone and uncared for, as I was till I met you, six months ago."

"My poor little love!" he murmured, raising her hand to his lips. "What a happy inspiration it was of mine," he went on, after a moment's pause, "to take lodgings in the dear, dull old house in the Rue des Ecoles—little I dreamt that I should meet my fate under that roof! Do you know that it was your voice that decided me to take the rooms?"

"My voice?"

"When the concierge showed them to me you were singing over your work in the story above. I asked him whose was that exquisite voice, like a chime of silver bells? It was a little flower-maker, *au sixième*, he told me, whom the neighbours called 'Miss Nightingale,' and it was worth five francs a month extra, he assured me, to have her for a fellow lodger."

Georgette laughed and blushed.

"What a compliment from old Podevin!"

"I quite agreed with him, and we came to terms on the spot. I found that my musical neighbour had a face that matched her voice, and if ever there was a case of love at first sight it was mine, Georgette. My heart went out to you, dear, from the moment when first your sweet, shy, blue eyes met mine."

"And mine to you," she whispered.

"Is that true? then why did you take such trouble to avoid me, little coquette?"

"Now that is ungrateful. Was I not ——"

"You were the kindest and most obliging of neighbours, I admit," he interrupted; "but you were as shy as a bird. I seldom caught a glimpse of you except we met by chance on the stairs, and then sometimes, instead of stopping to speak, you would dart past me like a flash of light."

"My time was more valuable than yours, you see," she explained. "I work in earnest, while you only play at work. You need not look dignified, you know it is the truth. If you had no other resource but your pen, no rich relations in the background who ——"

"You forget that I cut myself adrift from them two years ago, when I gave up the profession they had chosen for me, and turned from the sandy desert of the law into the flowery fields of literature. From their point of view, I have committed social suicide; they have formally washed their hands of me."

His companion's face clouded.

"What would they say if they knew that—that you were betrothed to a common work-girl?" she asked, with a troubled smile.

"They do know it," he answered quietly. "I wrote to my father some days ago."

She started, and the colour rushed to her face.

"And he—has he answered your letter? what did he say?"

"What did he not say, rather?" returned Etienne, laughing. "You don't expect me to repeat it all, I hope? Why do you look so scared, child? You know that nothing he can say—nothing anyone can say or do would make me give you up."

"I know. But—but perhaps it is selfish of me to let you sacrifice your prospects for my sake," she faltered, looking at him in wistful doubt. "Perhaps some day you will regret ——"

"Georgette," he interrupted reproachfully, "have you so little faith in my love? have you so soon forgotten all I said to you under these very trees, when we plighted our troth?"

"How could I forget?"

"Then trust me, dearest, and do not fear the future. It comes to us smiling, with both hands full of blessings."

"Ah, do not expect too much from it, Etienne."

"Well, if it only brings me bread and cheese, *and you*, I shall be contented," he returned.

"Contented without fame or riches?" she questioned, smiling. "I thought you were ambitious?"

"So I was—once, but there is no room for ambition in a heart that is full to the brim of love. After all," he added philosophically, "what the happier should I be for riches or renown? I have set up my tent in the pleasant land of Bohemia, where there is no shame in a shabby coat, where poverty is picturesque, and even starvation has its poetical side."

Georgette raised her eyebrows.

"It is plain that whoever first said so never felt it," she commented, drily. Something in her tone made her companion look round at her face.

"Georgette, how you said that! One would almost think that you ——"

"That I had known that poetical pain myself?" she added, with a smile, half sad, half ironical. "Perhaps I have. You see I have only these"—holding up her hands—"to keep the wolf from the door, and if work fails me for a time, he peeps in. Ah, he is not in the least 'poetical' I assure you, but the ugliest monster you can imagine."

She shuddered, then broke into a laugh. "You look as startled as if you saw him at this moment peeping over my shoulder. Why do you talk of such horrors, Etienne? let us change the subject."

Etienne was silent. A curious chill crept over him; a sudden shadow seemed to have fallen on the bright day. There was a jarring sense of incongruity in the association of Georgette with such grim realities as want and hardship. He looked at the sweet, courageous face, the fragile figure, the delicate little hands that had been forced to fight so hard a battle for bare existence, and his

heart swelled with pity and a generous sort of shame as he contrasted his easy, indolent life with hers.

He seized her fingers and covered them with kisses.

"Dear, brave little hands! I never loved them so well. Thank heaven, they will not have to toil much longer."

She smiled, and passed her hand over his hair again.

"So when I share your tent in the pleasant land of Bohemia I shall have nothing to do all day but count my fingers?"

"You will have nothing to do but to love me and be happy."

"*'Aimer, chanter—voilà ma vie!'*" she broke into melody as naturally as a bird sings. "But do you know that it is getting late?" she added, looking round.

And, indeed, while they had been talking the golden afternoon had crept away. Shadows were lengthening on the slopes, and in the ferny hollows of the park it was already dusk.

Presently all the fountains ceased, and there was a sudden hush and stillness in the air; a sense of coolness, freshness, moisture; an odour of wet earth and grass. The water in the "Basin of Neptune" subsided into stillness, though its surface was still fretted with ripples like a miniature sea, and the great metal groups of Neptune and Amphitrite, Proteus, and the strange sea-monsters, dripped and glistened in the last rays of the setting sun. An hour later Georgette and her lover left the grounds, and made their way to the station, where a train was just starting for Paris.

It was pleasant to be borne swiftly through the wide, dusky landscape, alongside of the sweet Seine, dimly shining in the starlight; past Saint Cloud and Surènes, with their pretty villas buried in foliage; past Puteaux with its market-gardens, and Asnières with its flotilla of pleasure-boats, till the lights of Paris began to sparkle round them, the vague white glare of the electric light showing where the Place de l'Opéra lay; the long lines of lamps on the exterior boulevards stretching away in apparently endless perspective on every side.

Then came the loitering walk homewards along the brilliant streets, where all Paris seemed to be sitting outside the cafés taking its cigar and "chasse"—over the Pont Neuf, where they paused to look at the moon in the river, and so into the labyrinth of quaint, old-world streets of the classic Quartier Latin.

It was nine o'clock when they reached the Rue des Ecoles.

As they passed the concierge's den, the latter, a snuffy old man, in a holland apron and tasselled smoking-cap, put out his head and called them back.

"A letter for you, Ma'amselle Georgette. Came by the mid-day post. A man's writing," he added, as he handed it to her.

"I have no gentlemen correspondents, Monsieur Podevin."

"It's a gentleman's writing anyhow," he repeated.

She scrutinized the direction with a puzzled look, then shrugged her shoulders, and put the letter into her pocket.

"Perhaps it is an order for flowers," she remarked.

"For orange-blossoms, hein?" suggested the old man, with a sly glance at Etienne.

"If so I shall not accept it," was Georgette's answer.

"Why?" her lover demanded, as he followed her upstairs; "surely it would be a good omen."

"No; if you make them for others you will never wear them yourself, they say."

"Superstitious child! You will let me see that letter, won't you? I shall not sleep till I know who is your mysterious correspondent."

"Is monsieur jealous, for example?" she asked, throwing a laughing glance at him over her shoulder.

"Not the least in the world," he protested. "I am only curious."

"Well, come up to my landing, and I will satisfy your curiosity as soon as I have lighted the lamp. Where is my key? ah, there it is!"

She unlocked her door and entered, while her companion stood outside, looking in at the humble little room whose threshold he had never crossed. The moonlight filled it, giving it a dreamy, unreal look, showing the little white bed in an alcove, the work-table with its pretty litter of half-finished flowers, the bird-cage and plants in the window, and his own photograph on the wall, with a print of our Lady of Lourdes above it. Everything was as daintily neat and trim as Georgette herself, and the room was sweet with the scent of mignonette.

"Bon soir, Jaunet! and thou too, Mignon," said the girl, as she entered, greeting her feathered and furred companions.

The canary responded with a shrill chirp, while the cat jumped on to her shoulder, and purred a welcome. When the lamp was lighted she came towards her lover, who was watching her with all his heart in his eyes.

Her hair, damp with the night-dews, lay in loose curled rings on her forehead; fatigue had made her paler than usual, but her eyes shone like twin stars.

"You look at me as if you had never seen me before," she said, smiling.

"I have never seen you look so sweet."

"Thank you; but you say that every time we meet, do you know?"

"Because at every meeting I discover a fresh beauty."

"And never any defects?"

He took her face between his hands, and looked at it critically.

"Yes; you are too pale, but that is soon remedied. One—two," he kissed her on each cheek; "there, that is better. Now look at me; let me see if your eyes are laughing as well as your lips."

They were laughing when she raised them to his face, but the look of passionate tenderness they encountered made them droop with

sudden gravity, and brought a still warmer tide of colour to her face.

"My sweet!" he whispered, bending till his bearded cheek touched hers; "it is a delight to look at you; it is joy to love you, and to be loved by you is heaven itself. Is there another man in Paris, I wonder, so happy as I am at this moment?"

"Hush!" she interposed, putting her hand to his lips; "don't boast of happiness, that is the way to lose it."

He laughed.

"Another superstition! How many more have you in stock? And now for the letter. Let me hold the lamp while you open it."

"You will let me read it to myself first, I suppose? No, you are not to look over my shoulder," she added, laughing and drawing back; "have patience."

Smiling still, she unfolded it, but she had hardly glanced at the first lines when her face changed. The colour faded out of it suddenly; the light from her eyes, the laughter from her lips. She glanced rapidly down the page, then hastily refolded it, and thrust it into her pocket.

"Georgette!" Etienne exclaimed, "you promised to show it to me."

"Not now—to-morrow," she faltered.

"To-night; at once, if you please," he persisted, his face darkening; "it is no ordinary letter to cause such agitation. I have a right to see it; give it to me," and he laid his hand on hers.

She looked up at him piteously. "Not now—to-morrow," she repeated, hardly above a whisper.

He let go her hand, and turned from her, his face dark with jealous anger. She clasped her hands upon his arm, and detained him.

"Do not part from me in anger to-night—do not, my darling! trust me till to-morrow."

He looked at her a moment with troubled eyes, but there was no resisting the pleading of that sweet, tearful face.

"So be it," he said, gravely; "you shall tell me your secret at your own time. Good-night, Georgette."

As he bent towards her, with a sudden, impulsive movement, the girl put her arms round his neck, and drew his head down, kissing him again and again with quivering lips, then took the lamp from his hand, and turned away.

Touched and surprised by her unwonted effusion, he went slowly downstairs, pausing, when he reached his own landing, to look up.

Georgette was leaning over the banisters with the lamp in her hand, looking down at him. There was an expression on her face he had never seen there before; a rapt, far-away gaze that gave it a spiritual look. The moment he glanced up at her she vanished into her own room, and all was dark.

Many a time in after years Etienne saw her in dreams, bending towards him with that rapt look in her eyes, with the shadows around her and the light upon her face.

Etienne passed a restless night and woke late next morning, feeling unrefreshed, and with a strange sense of oppression and uneasiness.

It was a gloomy day, with a leaden sky and a chill wind.

"The weather is breaking!" the concierge remarked, when he brought up the roll and cup of *café au lait* for his lodger's "first breakfast." "Yesterday was the last of the summer."

"The last day of summer." The young man found himself repeating the words thoughtfully as if they contained some hidden meaning.

It was after eleven o'clock by the time he had finished. He went up to Georgette's room and tapped at the door. It was not latched, and as his summons met with no reply he gently pushed it open and looked in.

The expression of pleasurable anticipation faded suddenly from his face, giving place to one of blank perplexity and astonishment.

One glance showed him that Georgette was not there, and it showed him something else. All her belongings had vanished. The room was stripped and bare.

He stared round stupidly, trying in vain to understand it. Georgette *gone!* It seemed like a bad dream, from which he would wake presently to find her before him.

At length, rousing himself from his stupefaction, he hurried downstairs to question the concierge.

"Oh, yes, Ma'amselle Georgette is gone, sure enough," the old man told him, coolly. "She came down shortly after nine o'clock, and told me that she was obliged to leave immediately. She paid her term and fetched a *fiacre* herself. The driver carried her box downstairs, and—*paf!* she was gone; all in a breath, as one may say. But she left a note for you, monsieur; that will explain it, no doubt."

"Why could you not tell me that at first?" Etienne asked impatiently, snatching it from his hand.

Enclosed was the letter which she had received on the previous evening, together with a few lines in her own writing. He put the former aside without a glance and took up her hurried note.

"Dear love, I write with a breaking heart to bid you farewell," it began. "The letter I received last night was from your father. When you have read it you will know why I have left you."

Etienne uttered a passionate exclamation. "My father! ah—I understand. He knew that I should never give her up, so he has taken the surest means of driving her from me."

"If a marriage with me," Georgette wrote, "would ruin all your prospects, and spoil your life at the outset, as he says, I must never be your wife. I love you too well to injure you so cruelly, and

therefore, though it tears my heart, I must say—adieu ! Forgive me, my beloved—and forget me.”

The letter ended there, but overleaf there was a postscript, which had evidently been added on a sudden impulse at the last moment.

“My courage fails me. I cannot, cannot write that cruel word, ‘farewell.’ I must have a hope, however slight, to keep me from despair. Dearest, in two years’ time you will be your own master ; then, if your love is unchanged, we may meet again. On the first Sunday in September, two years hence, go to Versailles, and in the afternoon, when the fountains play, wait for me in the ‘Verte Allée’ where we sat yesterday. If I live I will come to you. Till then, my best-beloved, adieu !”

Etienne read it through twice and mechanically refolded it, then took up his father’s letter—a pitiless letter, every word of which must have gone like a knife to her heart. He did not wonder that in the first anguish of wounded pride and outraged affection she had fled from him, but he determined that he would not accept the separation. He would find her and bring her back.

He went out at once and spent the remainder of the day in searching for her, enquiring in every quarter where she was known. But all his efforts were in vain. Her lonely little figure had drifted out of sight, and was lost in the great labyrinth of Paris. Two long years must pass before he saw it again.

A chill September afternoon. The sky was covered with low-hanging clouds, the wind had a wistful sigh in it which promised rain.

It was unpropitious weather for a fête at Versailles, nevertheless there was no lack of visitors, and to one of them, who was slowly pacing the “Verte Allée,” this quiet, cool, grey day, full of soft mist and moisture, had a pensive charm of its own, like a picture in neutral tints, or an air in the minor key.

Etienne was first at the trysting-place : that quaint green avenue where Georgette and he sat to watch the fountains, two years ago.

Two years ; what a gulf of time it had seemed before he crossed it, and how short it appeared now, looking back ! He could have fancied it was only yesterday that he was loitering under the trees, with that bright, tender face at his side—the face which had guided him like a star through the lonely years to this day. Those years had been eventful ones to him. Fame had come to him, and he was on the highroad to fortune, too. He had left the “pleasant land of Bohemia” and the old nomadic life far behind him.

And Georgette, how had she fared ? what story would she have to tell him, he wondered. His heart sank strangely as he asked himself the question.

Not for a moment did he doubt that she would come. He knew—he felt that she would keep her word. He longed impatiently for

the meeting ; yet, mingled with that feeling there was a vague dread which he could not understand and could not shake off.

He stood near the statue of the water-nymph in its marble basin, looking towards the upper end of the walk, from which he expected her to appear. He had it to himself at present, though figures passed and repassed at each end of the long green vista, and the usual crowd was gathering round the Basins.

"She said 'when the fountains play,'" he muttered, consulting his watch. "It is after four o'clock now ; will they never begin ?"

Even as he spoke, the waters were released, and he heard once more the familiar musical sound—the rushing, splashing, rippling, falling all around him.

Still the walk was solitary. To right or left there was no approaching figure.

A dream-like feeling stole over him as he stood thus, watching, every sense and faculty strained in expectation. The present and the past seemed confused, and both wore an aspect of unreality.

At length, at the upper end of the glade, a woman's figure appeared. He could not yet distinguish the features, but he knew the shape, the walk, the dress. It was Georgette. His first impulse was to rush to meet her, but he restrained himself that he might enjoy the exquisite pleasure of seeing her come to him. His heart swelled with a joy so keen that it bordered upon pain, and tears rushed to his eyes.

She came slowly on down the walk, nearer and nearer, so that he could distinguish every feature ; nearer still, till she paused opposite to him, with one hand resting on the marble basin.

Still, he did not speak ; he did not stir. The look of rapturous expectation had faded from his face. He stood as if he were turned to stone. Was this Georgette ? with the wan, white cheeks, the hollow eyes, that looked at him with such forlorn appeal ; the pale lips, that seemed to have forgotten how to smile ?

There was a moment of silence.

She gazed at him as if she were trying to read his heart through his eyes ; her face expressed more than he could understand. Was it joy or pain, or a strange mingling of both, that yearning, wistful look ? He could not tell. Before he recovered himself sufficiently to speak, before he could even put out his hand to detain her—to his astonishment, she abruptly turned from him, and passed swiftly on down the walk.

He hastened after her, calling to her to stop, but she only quickened her pace ; and before he could overtake her, she had reached the terrace round "Neptune's Basin," and was lost in the crowd. He hurried to and fro, looking for her eagerly among the groups who were loitering round the Fountains or sitting under the trees. Nowhere was she to be seen. He went over the same ground half a dozen times, always returning to the walk in the hope of finding her

there, till at length he paused in bewilderment and consternation, and realized that he had lost her.

What did it mean? why had she fled from him? Could it be that she had misinterpreted his manner when they met?

At the first moment he had been too shocked and startled to speak; had she imagined that his love died a sudden death when he found her so piteously changed? The thought gave him a pang of self-reproach. He longed to fold her in his arms and tell her that never before had she been so dear to him.

He pursued his search with feverish anxiety, but she had melted into the crowd like a rain-drop into the sea, leaving no trace behind.

As it grew dusk, a fine penetrating rain began to fall, and the throng of visitors gradually dispersed, streaming out at the gates, and along the broad, quiet streets to the station.

Etienne went with the rest. He felt a conviction, for which he could hardly account, that he should find her in Paris.

But where was he to look for her? That was the question he asked himself as, after leaving the St. Lazare terminus, he stood hesitating in the Rue d'Amsterdam. Then it occurred to him that she might possibly be lodging in her old quarters in the Rue des Ecoles once more, or at any rate he might hear of her there.

He hailed a fiacre and drove across the water to the familiar street. The old concierge, with the holland apron and tasselled cap of yore, was smoking a post-prandial pipe at the door of his lodge.

"Good evening, M. Podevin," Etienne began; "you don't remember me, I see; but I was a lodger of yours two years ago."

The old man peered at him through the dusk, and then nodded.

"I recollect you now, though I did not at first. So many lodgers come and go, you see, like the swallows, in the course of two years," he said, apologetically.

"And it is but seldom, I suppose, that they come back to the old nest?"

"Well, it happens sometimes," the other returned, knocking out the ashes of his pipe against the door-post. "For example, there is Georgette Tréville—you remember her? the little ouvrière on the sixth; we used to call her 'Ma'amselle Rossignol'——"

"Yes, yes," he assented eagerly; "is she here now?"

"She came back to her old rooms a few weeks ago. There was some excuse for my not recognising her. She was so altered, I thought it was her ghost."

"Had she been ill?"

"That was what I asked her. 'No,' she said, 'she had not been ill—she had only been starving.'"

The young man uttered an exclamation that was like a cry of pain. "Good heavens! It cannot be ——"

The other nodded at him grimly, as he pressed the tobacco down in his pipe.

"You would not have doubted it if you had seen her. She had been short of work for several weeks, she told me; and to be short of work meant to be short of food, you see. It is a common case enough, monsieur."

Etienne was silent; there was a choking sensation in his throat, and a mist before his eyes. The old man watched him curiously.

"You were good friends, you and she, in the old times. She will be glad to see you again, pauvre petite. She has been ill the last few days with a sort of low fever, and has not been downstairs."

"But she was at Versailles this afternoon?"

His companion stared at him. "Not likely. She was in bed this morning, and my wife said she seemed worse."

"She was at Versailles this afternoon, for I saw her!" Etienne persisted.

M. Podevin pushed his cap aside, and rubbed his head with a puzzled look. "That is odd. I have not stirred from this loge, and I can swear I never saw her pass. However, if she did go she has certainly returned by this time, for she was never out after dusk, and if you would like to see her ——"

"Yes, I will go upstairs at once," Etienne interrupted, and he turned away.

A host of tender recollections rushed upon him as he mounted the familiar stairs to Georgette's door. It was half open, and he paused a moment on the threshold, looking in.

The room was in shadow except near the window, where the rays of the rising moon "made a dim silver twilight," and showed him—Georgette, seated with her back towards him at the little work-table. She still wore her hat and jacket, and was leaning with her forehead on her folded hands, in an attitude of weariness or dejection.

His heart beat painfully as he crossed the room to her side, and laid his hand lightly on her shoulder. She did not stir or speak.

"Georgette!" he whispered, then gently raised her head, and drawing it back against his breast, bent and kissed her.

Marble was not colder than the lips which met his.

A shudder ran through him from head to foot. His heart thrilled with a sudden awful fear.

"Georgette!" he cried aloud.

There was no answer.

"She has fainted," he gasped; "she has—only—fainted. She will be better presently."

He lifted the nerveless figure in his arms, and laid it on the bed; then went to the stair-head, and called loudly for assistance.

When the concierge, and those of the lodgers who had heard the summons, came hurrying in, he was on his knees at the bedside, chafing one of the little cold hands, and trying to warm it in his breast.

"Bring the light here," he said, abruptly, to M. Podevin, who

carried a small hand-lamp. The latter complied, holding it so that the light fell full upon the figure on the bed.

The face was waxen-white, and awfully still; the eyes were closed, the lips parted in a smile of unearthly serenity.

"Oh, God—my darling!"

The cry broke hoarsely from his white lips, as he sank on his knees at the bedside. "Georgette, my love, my little dove! Have I found you only to lose you for ever? Speak to me—look at me!"

But the "shy blue eyes" would never meet his again; the sweet lips were sealed for ever.

"All was ended now, the hope, and the fear, and the sorrow;
All the aching of heart, the restless, unsatisfied longing."

For her all was ended, but for him there were the desolate years to come: the loneliness, the weariness, the aching sense of loss which would never pass away.

Ten minutes later a doctor had been summoned, and the little room was full of horror-struck and compassionate faces.

"Syncope—inanition; defective action of the heart—humph!" muttered the surgeon, as he raised himself after a brief examination. "When did this happen? Who saw her last?"

"I saw her this afternoon, monsieur," a woman's voice replied, and the speaker came forward. "I lodge in the next room, and when I passed her door about two o'clock she was getting ready to go out. I was surprised, as she seemed so ill, but she told me she had promised to meet a friend at Versailles. However, she did not go, for when I returned she was sitting at the table there, as if she had fallen asleep."

"It was the sleep that knows no waking," spoke the doctor gravely.

Etienne, who had not yet moved or spoken, rose slowly to his feet. "What time—was that?" he asked, in a voice not his own.

"Three o'clock, monsieur, as near as I can guess."

The young man's figure swayed as if he were falling. He put his hand to his eyes. Awe and wonder too deep for words overpowered him.

The angel of death had summoned Georgette before the hour appointed for their meeting.

Who was it, then—*what* was it, he had seen at the trysting-place?

We are told that "love is stronger than death." Is it irreverent to believe that its magnetic power might be permitted for a moment to draw back a spirit from the shadowy borders of the Silent Land?

JOHN NEWTON OF OLNEY.

IN the year 1725 a gallant ship came sailing up the Thames towards London. Merrily the crew chatted to each other over curious little keepsakes of shell, or coral, brought home for wife or sweetheart, or discussed their first frolic on shore. They had been away from England for several months, and the sight of each familiar object, as they glided up the grand old river, made each heart leap lightly in each broad breast.

The only man who looked grave and abstracted was the captain : a tall, muscular young fellow, with a face that seemed to have both feeling and intelligence lurking in its strongly marked features. When the ship came to the landing-place, his eye wandered restlessly about among the people on the quay, as though he expected to see someone waiting there to bring him hasty tidings. When, at length, the time came for him to land, he sprang on shore with a quick eager movement. With rapid strides he passed along the streets, where the ladies in paint and powder rolled by in their coaches, and the fine gentlemen sauntered with their clinking swords, and the men of business speeded towards court of law and counting-house. But the captain heeded none of them ; he looked like one whose mind was filled with one idea, which came from within, and not from without.

At last he drew near his own home, a modest dwelling, in a quiet part of the town, and as he drew near, his heart began to beat yet quicker. Now the door was reached, and as he crossed the threshold, the first sound that met his ear was the cry of a child. Then a glad woman's voice exclaimed, " Thank God, Captain Newton, your wife is safe, and your son is a fine healthy boy."

The child who came on that day into the world, and to whom was soon given the name of John, began very quickly to show that he had both brain and soul. His mother, who was Scotch by birth, was a woman of mark in many ways ; she had a keen wit, and a warm, wide heart, and, best of all, she had a religion, which was the very cornerstone to the fair and precious gifts and graces which built up her character.

As soon as her boy began to toddle, and to show by bright glance and ready tongue that he had no common intelligence, she resolved that he should grow up to be a man of mind, and a man of faith ; accordingly, when he was but two years old, she taught him his letters, and his first prayer. At her knee he heard of the manger, and the cross ; at her knee his baby fancy opened to all things sweet and pure, and took them in as dear congenial guests. By the time he was four he could read fluently, and knew more Bible stories than many children who had seen twice his years.

The history of John Newton's boyhood and early manhood would, no doubt, be a very different record, had his mother lived to watch longer over his development ; but God took her away before she had reached middle age. Still, though the good seed was checked for a while, the mother's angel influence was in after days to fall upon it in memory like the warm latter rain, and, with the help of grace from above, to make it bring forth noble fruit for God and man.

Mrs. Newton left the world when her son was but seven years old. His father soon married again, and for his second wife unfortunately chose a woman who was utterly unworthy of her duties as a step-mother. She gave the boy not the faintest gleam of love, or even of care ; she ignored him almost as if he had not belonged in any way to her, or her husband, and left him to grope his way between right and wrong as best he could for himself.

The sudden change from the home where his own mother had reigned, to the home where this woman was queen, could not fail to work badly upon the child's character. The good that was in him began to droop, and the evil to put forth fresh shoots. He had a resolute will, and strong passions : his mother had soon found out this, and had led him with a firm, though gentle hand ; but now she was gone, and there was no one who knew her spell.

His father seems to have felt for him much real affection ; but partly, probably, through his long and frequent absences from home, and partly, probably, from his step-mother exaggerating all that was worst in his nature, when she spoke of him to her husband, Captain Newton quite mistook his son, and treated him with extreme harshness ; when, had he applied to the young spirit the touchstone of love, it would doubtless have wrought wonders. He was sent to school for a time, but the discipline there used was ineffectual to counteract the teaching of the college of vice in which the boy graduated in the London streets, as, without any kindly star to lure him back to his home, he wandered through them in early morn and late night, and grew bolder in mixing with all that he there saw and heard.

At length, when his son was eleven, Captain Newton began to think that it was time for him to have a little more to do with the lad's education ; and accordingly he took him with him on one of his voyages to the Mediterranean.

A seaman's life of adventure roused all young John Newton's more active energies, and brought them into play, and the sight of blue waves dancing beneath a southern moon, and southern stars burning like seraph's eyes, and orange groves watching round tiny bays in fairy isles, woke up his imagination. But intercourse with the rough sailors naturally did not serve to elevate his way of thinking and acting, and as his father still continued to treat him with coldness and severity, the daily contact of parent and child failed to bring out one single note of music between them. He went several voyages

with his father, the objects of which were generally some port on the Italian or French coast. At last Captain Newton, despairing of ever making any way in the task of breaking in the lad, who only rebelled the more the tighter he drew the rein, resolved that the next time John went to sea he should sail under another captain, and prevailed on a reliable friend to promise him an advantageous place in his ship.

The voyages John Newton had made with his father had spread over several years. He was now a fine, well-grown fellow of eighteen, with a face where restless daring and headstrong will were awake, while thought slept in the deep eyes and on the massive brow.

It happened that at this period, between his return home from his last voyage with his father, and the time appointed for his new ship to sail, he went to pay a long visit to some relations of his mother in Kent. The daughter of the house in which he staid was a fair young girl of fourteen, whose feet were just dancing across the boundary between child and woman. She was a creature all sunshine and song, and yet with grave, gracious, almost matronly instincts, already waking up in her heart. Between this girl and the sailor lad there quickly grew up love ; a love that had root in no shallow soil, as time was to prove.

No doubt this affection raised and purified, in some degree, young Newton's whole nature. She was as free as the soaring lark's wing from any stain of the world's miry paths along which he had trodden so far ; when he was near her, each rough word, and even each passion was hushed ; when she spoke softly of her prayers for him, memories rose before him of his mother, and in vague yearnings his heart went up towards God. Still, in her sweet girlishness, she had not sufficient influence at this time to make an entire and radical change in his life, and his own conscience was not, as yet, enough awakened to force him to struggle earnestly against the evil that was in him.

Thus it came to pass that the woman who was one day to be the light of his home, innocently became, for the moment, a wandering star, leading him into a wrong road. While he was lingering at the side of his love, the day came for his ship to sail. Had she known it, she would certainly have persuaded him to go ; but as it was, Newton's mind was not sufficiently disciplined to listen to the call of duty before that of inclination, and he let the vessel sail without him. The anger of father and step-mother may be imagined.

But though John Newton would not go to sea of his own accord, he was soon to find that he would have to go in spite of himself. He was idling on shore, dreaming of many vain things, when one day the press-gang met him, and forced him into the royal service ; he was hurried on board a ship, and before he well knew where he was, our young man was speeding down channel with a brisk breeze behind him. No doubt he bitterly repented that he had not gone to

sea of his own free will when he might, and no doubt this was a bit of most salutary schooling for him.

Newton did not remain long in this enforced service to the crown ; by the leniency of the officer in command, he was allowed to exchange into another ship they met on the voyage. Soon after he had regained his freedom, he showed that he still did not know how to make a good use of it ; the ship was a slaver, and when they reached Sierra Leone, which was their destination, he took service there with a slave owner. In blaming Newton for thus voluntarily connecting himself with the slave-trade, we must remember in what a very different light it was looked upon in those days, from the way in which we view it with our modern eyes ; no doubt, when, in after life, the full blaze of gospel light shone down upon him, he felt the whole horror and disgrace to humanity of such a traffic.

Newton soon found that the way of life he had chosen was not by any means a path of velvet. His master, a coarse-minded man, made up of self and money, treated him like an underling, and put all the hardest work of the business upon his shoulders ; his health gave way in the trying African climate, and he was completely prostrated by disease. His master's negress wife, a woman of low tastes, and lower feeling, had taken a rooted dislike to him, and, false to every true and tender instinct of her sex, she now delighted in doing her utmost to misuse and torment the sick man who lay beneath her roof. She denied him both care and medicine ; she found a brutal amusement in mocking and mimicking his languid, tottering movements with her other servants when, rising from his mat, his only bed, he crept out into the sunshine ; she refused to give him any food, except a little broken meat, which, for the greater indignity, she sent him after dinner on her own plate. We may fancy to what a state of weakness the poor fellow was brought, when we hear from himself that the chance breaking of this plate, and the wasting of the victuals upon it, made him shed tears.

How must old memories of boyhood, and home, and friends, and happy scenes in England, have crowded round him through the long and weary nights, when the hot, heavy wind, that stole in at the window, scorched his feverish brow, even while he tried to fancy it was refreshing him ; when the wild cry of some strange bird reached him from the neighbouring plantation ; when his nervously sharpened ear distinguished the faint rustle of the grass in the garden, as a snake glided through it. We wonder that such a season of suffering as this did not prove a road to lead him to the rock of ages. But the time was not yet come.

Newton's powerful young constitution, and the energy of will which was always one of his most marked characteristics, and which made him struggle against bodily weakness as few men would have done, at length brought him back to life. He had one to live for, and he was resolved that he would return to her. As soon as his health was

sufficiently restored for his mind to go out of himself, his thoughts began to turn towards home. His position was a low and degrading one, and he had nothing to bind him there. His friends in England, softened probably by news of his illness, which had reached them, sent out kindly messages to him by the captain of a ship, with whom they asked him to return; he was quite ready now to listen to their overtures, and before long he had left the coast of Guinea and was sailing northward.

A terrible storm overtook the vessel on its homeward voyage. The masts bent in the wild wind, the ship plunged, and her timbers groaned as though she were a living thing in pain; the waves leapt in white mountains on the deck. Everyone in the vessel felt that they were in extreme danger, and many lips, that had not uttered a word of prayer for years, began to call upon God; but Newton, with characteristic hardihood, jested lightly, and sang snatches of merry songs.

The black hours went slowly on, and the situation of the ship grew more and more desperate; the crew looked at each other with the agony of a dumb despair in their eyes; and still the pitiless dark sky spread out overhead, and still the hideous music of the storm rang mockingly around the luckless vessel. It was then, as if the whole story of his past life had suddenly stood out before him written in characters of fire, that John Newton cried out with an exceeding bitter cry, "May the Lord have mercy upon us." From that moment Newton himself dated his leaving the downward for the upward path.

The good ship did not go down that day, as all her trembling crew had expected; the hand of God was over her, for there was one on board her whom He wanted for His service. The storm abated; the sky and sea grew calm; and the vessel found her way to a port, where her damages were repaired. No wonder, however, that in after days, when John Newton stood up in the pulpit to speak to crowded congregations about the struggles of the Christian's life, his favourite images were stormy winds and beating waves.

The entire change in Newton's life did not come all at once; gradually, but surely, he rose to higher things. For some little time he still continued his seafaring trade, and still soiled his hands with keeping up a connection with slave-owners; he lingered yet in the world's great market-place, though he heard the voice of his Lord calling him up to His temple. At length, however, he resolved to break entirely with his old companions and habits. So he gave up the sea, married the girl who had always been his heart's true queen, and who, now that she had reached riper years, exercised a quiet influence for good over him, and founded a modest home at Liverpool, where he obtained the situation of tide-surveyor. That home quickly led him yet further upward. He felt that he must give himself in no half way to his God; he determined to become a clergyman, was

ordained, and took the curacy of Olney, in Buckinghamshire, which was a sole charge, the incumbent being non-resident.

As may well be supposed, Newton found many difficulties to meet and overcome in undertaking his new duties, which were so different from anything that had hitherto made part of his life; but the energy of his nature here came to his help. He made up his mind to be a good clergyman, and a good clergyman he soon became. His earnestness in parish work, and his vigour and freshness in the pulpit soon drew towards him many eyes in those days of supineness in the Church. The people of Olney first learned to be proud of their curate, and then to love him, and to let his strong hand lead them up to God.

The thought of the many years in which he had done nothing for either God or man, always, in some measure, cast a shadow over Newton, and gave a touch of gravity to both his face and manner. Hence it came that, when people were first introduced to him, they often called him gloomy and severe, and shrank from his companionship; but it only needed a little nearer knowledge of the man, to find out that underneath the somewhat hard exterior of the old sailor-preacher was hidden a store of peace, and love, and long-suffering gentleness and cheerful charity, from which the weak, and weary, and erring might come and draw as from an exhaustless fountain.

One of the most interesting features in Newton's story at Olney is his close friendship with Cowper. Each was probably a true help to the other in a peculiar way, and in a way which each needed; the poet softened the preacher, and the preacher strengthened the poet. We have all of us reason to be glad and thankful for the close connection of the two together, since from it sprang a book of hymns, one or more of which is found in almost every collection of Christian sacred songs. Let us catch a glimpse, for a moment, of one of those calm, bright evenings when "the Olney Hymns" were written.

The lamp glows softly, the fire crackles merrily, the tea-urn is singing to itself a cosey song. At that little table in the corner sits a man. We gaze with reverence at the noble, intellectual brow; our looks hang lovingly on the sweet mouth; but why is it that there is something in the eyes from which we shrink at the moment? there is nothing unkind in them, nothing fierce; it is a gleam which flashes out now and then, and which is strangely restless, strangely sad.

There comes a wondrous softness, however, into those eyes as they turn towards the lady who has just entered noiselessly, and seated herself before the urn. Was ever woman's face such a very star of repose? she looks like a sister of charity sent down from God to bind up bruised hearts, and heal wounded minds, and lift up and support fallen, weary souls; there is something soothing in her very movements. And now their eyes have met. What love and strength there is in her gaze when Mrs. Unwin looks at Cowper, the man

whose poet-soul has always the horror of insanity hanging over it, and who owes it to her, in a great measure, that his spirit knows so much peace to-day.

But who is this that comes in with a quick, almost impetuous step? the step of a man who always seems to be hurrying on to busy work; a step that hardly suits, we fancy, this quiet dwelling. Yet still, when they hear it, both the occupants of the room look up and smile. His broad, bronzed hands look more fit for a hammer than a pen; his face has something rugged about it, and the lines written upon it speak more, we think, of sound, sensible prose, than of rhyme. But when his heart and mind dwell on the thought of man's redemption, and of the love that came down from heaven to save, the poet's fire flashes out in brain and glance, and John Newton sits down by Cowper's side, a worthy companion in his work.

After awhile Newton moved from the curacy of Olney to the living of St. Mary Woolnoth, which was given him. Here his force in the pulpit, and his strong intellectual power became more widely known, and both his church and his house were filled with admirers. But still the memory of those early years of carelessness towards God lay ever on his heart, a potent shield to keep the vainglory of the world from entering there. The older John Newton grew, however, the brighter grew his joy and peace in believing, and his was a glorious sunset telling of the perfect day beyond.

ALICE KING.



THE BLACKBIRD.

BLACKBIRD! with so clear a note
Hidden in thy dusky throat,
Sing thy sweetest; flowers of May
All too quickly pass away.

Blackbird! little carest thou
If they go, or when, or how;
'Tis for man to live corroding
Present pleasure with foreboding.

Let me then be taught of thee
Anxious care and thought to flee;
He who dreadeth each to-morrow
Must, perforce, have double sorrow.

SYDNEY GREY.

HOW I CAPTURED THE BURGLARS.

I WAS the eldest of a family of eight, three boys and five girls, and our mother dying soon after the birth of the youngest, much of her cares devolved on me. We were happy, healthy children, but certainly not dreamy or poetic ones, which was the more singular considering the nature of my father's profession—that of an artist. Perhaps it was the consciousness that he would have made his way better in life had he been less sensitive and imaginative, that made my father so anxious to mould our minds in a different form to his own. He kept his dreamings for his studio, and was almost morbidly careful to check any romantic or sentimental tendencies in his children.

I am not sure if this system of repression was not carried rather to an extreme; whether we, in our healthy, cheerful home, were not inclined to be rather intolerant of what we called “nerves” or “fancies” in our neighbours; meaning thereby sensitive or imaginative feelings that had never been cultivated in ourselves. If a stranger had broken his leg on our doorstep I believe we should have nursed him to admiration; but I fear that real though less tangible suffering might have met with less sympathy at our hands, if it took the form of what we were pleased to call “sentiment.”

Therefore, it seemed an instance of the inscrutable fate that so often bids the square man fill the round hole, that I, of all people, should be asked to spend Christmas with my cousin Maggie. I was just seventeen, and a busy woman for my age. I suppose it was the fame of my general “capableness” that made poor cousin Philip turn to me in his trouble. Anyway, it was to our house he came one day in the beginning of December, to beg that I would stay with his wife during his absence abroad.

We had known Philip all our lives; he had lived in our house till his uncle took him into partnership, about ten years before the time my story commences. About a year after joining his uncle, Philip married. His wife was a pretty, fragile-looking creature, utterly unlike any of us. She was delicate, and a little fanciful; had been a petted child, and was now a petted wife. Philip adored her, and now that he was obliged to go to France on business connected with the firm, was dreadfully worried at the idea of leaving her alone at Christmas.

“You’ll be a good Samaritan, Jane,” he pleaded, “and just stay a week or two at Graylands. Maggie is so nervous at the idea of being left in that large house with only the servants and the children.”

“And pray what protection should I be against ghosts and

robbers?" I inquired, rather scornfully, for nervousness was a thing I had no kind of sympathy with.

"There are no ghosts or robbers, of course, but you could keep her spirits up. She has never been strong since baby was born, you know."

So the matter ended in my starting for Graylands. I found Maggie all smiles and gratitude for my "goodness" in coming to her, and she really did look so thin and pale that my heart softened even to her nervous fears.

Actual bodily illness was a thing I could pity, and Maggie was so gentle and affectionate, that it was impossible to be much with her without liking her. Contrary to my expectations, I enjoyed my visit extremely. The children were capital companions. Despite the bitter winds, we walked and skated, and on days when the weather kept us prisoners, made the old house ring with our games at hide-and-seek, and battledore. Yet, truth to tell, Graylands was hardly a cheerful residence; it was lonely even for the country; the town was five miles off, and our nearest neighbouring house a stately castle whose noble owner had never resided on his property for twenty years. A few old servants kept the house in order, and the game-keeper's lodge was nearly a mile from our garden gate. "We must look to him as our champion in case of robbers," I had once said, laughingly, but the very idea of such a contingency arising seemed to alarm Maggie so much that I never ventured on such a joke again.

Christmas came and passed, and the weather grew drearier than ever. It was what the country people called "soft weather"—bitterly cold, but foggy and slushy, instead of that clear, bright frost that is so welcome to skaters and sliders. Maggie grew depressed, the children fractious, all of us caught colds. I began to acknowledge that Maggie's objections to Graylands, as a winter residence, were not ill-founded.

Things were in this state when the monotony of our lives was broken by a call from one of our neighbours, a country squire, who lived about eight miles off. Doubtless many of our readers have observed the great avidity with which even the kindest-hearted people communicate disagreeable intelligence. Mr. Catling was one of the best natured of men, but I doubt if the mere charitable desire to cheer our solitude would have induced him to ride sixteen miles on a dark winter's day.

"So you haven't heard of my losses, ladies?" was his remark, after the first friendly greetings had been exchanged.

"We never hear of anything at Graylands," I answered, laughing.

"Well, I hope you won't hear of the visitors who honoured me with a call yesterday," was the reply; "although, as they were so successful in my case, they may be disposed to try other houses. Morgan, the constable, believes they are lurking somewhere in the neighbourhood still."

"Burglars!" said Maggie, her delicate cheek growing pale.

"Just so, my dear lady. On descending yesterday morning, old Robert, my butler, found that the drawing-room window had been forced, and all the collection of Indian silver ornaments—cups, and such things, you know—that my old uncle left me, had been taken. Luckily, they did not attempt the pantry; but they paid a visit to the harness-room, and cleared away everything there—I don't know whether for the sake of the articles themselves, or to throw obstacles in the way of our giving notice to the police; there was not even a halter left for the pony, and James had to walk five miles to the saddler's before I could ride to Settlebourne and communicate with the police. And I hear that mine is not the only house these burglarious gentry have favoured with a call; they appear to have come down from London on a regular excursion tour among lonely country houses."

Here was a cheerful visitor! I felt inexpressibly provoked at this ill-judged story. In Maggie's nervous state it was enough to make her quite ill. But Mr. Catling, engrossed in his own misfortunes, was blind to any effect his tale might have on his listeners, and talked and dwelt on the subject of the burglars despite every effort of mine to turn the conversation.

"I hope I have not alarmed you, Mrs. Sinclair," he said, as he rose to take his leave.

"You have certainly done your best to do so," I answered, rather snappishly.

"Bless me, I'm extremely sorry, I'm sure, but such an occurrence is one that one cannot help speaking about. However, if you ladies feel the least nervous at being here alone, do allow me to send the pony chaise over to fetch you to my house. Mrs. Catling would be delighted."

"Oh, thank you, but it would be impossible to leave the children," answered Maggie.

"H'm," said Mr. Catling, hesitatingly, "there are six of them, are there not, as well as the baby? We should be glad enough to take you all in, only ——"

"Of course," I said, laughing, "we are rather too large a party to inflict ourselves on anyone's hospitality. But if you feel timid, Maggie, why don't you accept Mr. Catling's kind offer. The children will be safe enough with me, and if burglars do come I'll throw a jug of cold water over them."

I was not the least alarmed at the idea of robbers coming to our house, but I did feel anxious about Maggie, and should have been glad to have seen her safely away. Nothing, however, would induce Maggie to leave the children, and as Mr. Catling could not possibly house us all, his kindly offer had to be declined.

"I tell you what I'll do," he said, as he took his leave; "it's too late to go so far to-day, but I'll ride into Settlebourne the first thing

to-morrow, and see if they could spare a constable just for a day or two to watch this house. Being ladies alone, without any man on the premises, this might be a likely house to be attempted," added the unlucky man, who seemed doomed to make injudicious remarks.

Maggie sat down trembling. "Do you think there is really any danger?" she faltered.

"How silly you are, Maggie!" I exclaimed. "Most likely, while we are talking, Morgan has the thieves in Settlebourne gaol. They would never be foolish enough to try to rob another house close in the same neighbourhood, after they knew an alarm had been raised, in any case.—You are terrifying her to death," I whispered, indignantly, to Mr. Catling, who was so overcome by the reproach, that he burst into elaborate apologies and explanations till he got fairly out of the room.

"Stupid creature," I said, as he rode away. "I hope you won't allow this occurrence to frighten you, Maggie."

"The burglars really came though, Jane."

"All the less reason for their paying us a visit." And I went on endeavouring to reassure the invalid, but with very partial success.

Maggie was really very unwell, and this story made a deeper impression upon her than it would have done on a person in health. In vain the children and I played our liveliest games, and at least kept the house noisy. Maggie was too depressed to join in our merriment, and when the little ones retired to bed and quiet fell on the mansion, she fairly broke down, and, with a fit of hysterical tears, declared she was sure, quite sure, that our house would be attacked that night.

To argue with her was useless. I persuaded her to lie down, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing her fall asleep, but with so troubled a slumber that I did not leave her side till nearly midnight.

I had said that I did not believe in any danger from burglars, but after the worry of the day, and the fatigue of my unwonted vigil, I myself began to feel dull and out of sorts, and found my mind dwelling on the possibilities of our house being attempted. We were a family of women exclusively: our gardener came daily from the village, and did not sleep on the premises; although, in any case, an old man would have been a poor help in danger. The gamekeeper and his son were our nearest protectors, and I must own that I rather wished their cottage was nearer.

"I'm getting as silly as Maggie," I said to myself, as I resolutely drew the bedclothes over my ears to stop myself listening for imaginary voices. "I do think fancies are infectious." And so moralising, I fell asleep.

I suppose I had slept some hours, when I was awakened by a terrified whisper at my ear—"Miss Jane, Miss Jane, they're a-trying our back door!"

I started up, and beheld the nurse and nurserymaid, in strange and wondrous déshabille, standing by my bed.

"It's gospel truth what Maria says, miss," gasped nurse, a portly woman, who looked white with terror; "you can see them with your own eyes out of the day nursery window. Two horrid-looking ruffians as ever came to murder poor innocent women—ugh!—ugh!"

"Don't wake your mistress, woman!" I cried. "In her delicate state it might nearly kill her."

"That's what I said, miss," struck in Maria. "I says, come to Miss Jane, she ain't afraid of anything."

This estimate of my courage was very flattering, but, at the present moment, hardly true, for I *did* feel terribly afraid. My only hope was that the women were mistaken.

"Come and see for yourself, miss," sobbed nurse. "I had got up to give baby his bottle, and went into the day nursery to fetch the matches, which Maria had forgot, and there under the window I heard voices."

"*Men's* voices, miss," put in Maria, who seemed to act the part of a chorus. "And nurse she comes back and wakes me, and both of us looks out of the front window, and there we see two men a trying the kitchen door."

By this time I had made a hasty toilet, and was ready to investigate for myself. It was with a very quaking heart that I crept noiselessly to the nursery window and peeped behind the blind. Alas! the terrible news was too true; two men, whose faces I could not distinguish in the dim light, but who certainly looked disreputable enough to my alarmed eyes, were cautiously trying the kitchen door. At their feet lay a long dark object, apparently a sack, doubtless designed to carry off any plunder they could obtain.

It is all very well to talk of not being afraid of burglars, but such an apparition, at five o'clock in the morning, was enough to startle the strongest-minded person. All the horrible stories I had ever heard of robberies and murders rushed across my excited brain. There was not much worth taking in the house; would the burglars kill us in their disappointment? was it wisest to let them in peaceably, and give them everything we had on condition they did not molest us? or could we give an alarm?

At this moment I remembered the gamekeeper's cottage. If we could only summon him to our aid! But how escape to do so? All the doors were in front of the house, and it was impossible to get out that way without being seen by the burglars. I peeped out again; evidently the kitchen door was too strongly fastened to give way readily, for the men seemed baffled in their efforts to open it. And as I listened I heard one say, in a gruff voice—exactly the tones of an orthodox ruffian—" 'Taint no good, Jem; better wait half an hour."

"Till the rest of your gang come up and you have more tools to

work with," I thought to myself. "Now if we could only let the gamekeeper know ——"

I returned to my own room with a project in my head. There was a staircase-window at the back of the house, not very high from the ground, and I thought if I could only get out there I might manage to give the alarm. Luckily the road to the gamekeeper's cottage lay behind the house. Nurse was too stupefied with terror to be any use, but Maria entered into the scheme at once.

Maggie still slept, and I trusted to return with help before she awoke.

I don't know *how* I got out of that window and alighted on a bed of wet garden mould. I have often heard that one never knows what one can do till one tries. I certainly had no idea that I or anyone else could run as fast as I did as soon as I got on my feet. In a very short time I was drumming at the gamekeeper's door.

I found both the men up and dressed; they were just starting on one of those nocturnal expeditions for the detection of possible poachers in which conscientious gamekeepers delight. They were rather startled at my appearance in a toilet that was certainly peculiar, and not improved by a quantity of mud it had gathered during my run. But they soon comprehended my breathless tale.

"A-tryin' your back door, miss!" said the father, a fine, stalwart man, who looked fit to engage a couple of burglars in single conflict; "bless you, we'll soon settle them gentry. Hand along the guns, Bill, and look alive. I'm mistaken if they men don't sleep in Settlebourne gaol to-night."

The sight of two resolute champions armed with revolvers was an encouraging spectacle, and as we hurried back I began to feel myself indeed a heroine. The gamekeeper was outspoken in admiration of my courage in coming for him, and I thought, with some satisfaction, that when Maggie awoke and learnt how I had preserved the household, she would understand what a valuable thing it was to have nerves and courage in face of danger.

"If I had sat down to cry, as poor dear Maggie would have done, we should certainly have been robbed, and perhaps murdered," I reflected as we sped along the road.

The gamekeeper checked our pace as we neared the house.

"You'd best keep this side, miss, out o' harm's way, and Bill and I 'ull slip round by the hedge, and tackle our men afore they sees us. Don't you be afeard; they burglars is the biggest cowards when they've a man to do with," and leaving me under the very window by which I had escaped, our two protectors stole noiselessly round to the front of the house. In another moment there was a cry, and I saw Bill dash across the garden, and over the hedge, in hot pursuit of one of the burglars, while a scuffle and loud voices told that his father was engaged in "tackling" the other. Curiosity prevailed over fear; I ran round the house, and beheld the gamekeeper in the act of bearing his antagonist to the ground.

"'Tain't no use struggling, and you may just as well come along quietly," said the conqueror; "we've fire-arms here, and there's two of us."

"I've nought in my pocket but fivepence in coppers," quivered the other, in a voice nearly inaudible with terror; "you may take 'em without murdering of me. Oh, dear! oh, dear! here I've lived in Settlebourne, man and boy, nigh fifty year, and to come to this at last!"

"Sakes alive!" exclaimed the gamekeeper, relaxing his hold, "you're never Tom Bates, the sweep?"

"And who else should I be?" said the injured Bates, slowly rising from the ground. "And I'd like to know who you are that comes a-rushing down like this on an honest man as is waiting to sweep the kitchen chimney."

"I took you for a housebreaker," said the gamekeeper, and proceeded to explain matters.

Bates shook his head doggedly. "No housebreaker has been here this last hour or more, as I knows well, having been a-waiting under this blessed window all the time."

A horrible suspicion began to dawn upon me—had I, the wise, the strong-minded, actually *given a false alarm*?

The gamekeeper was a civil man, but he had a sly twinkle in his eye as he turned to me, and said: "I think there's a little mistake here, miss."

"I should rather think there was," grumbled Bates, who by no means forgave the assault upon him.

"If you came to sweep the chimney," said I, endeavouring to assume an air of dignity, "why did you not ring the bell, or try to wake the servants, instead of endeavouring to open the door for yourself?"

"Cooks mostly leaves the door on the latch when the sweep is ordered early," replied Bates—a fact, by the way, that perhaps explained the facility with which some of our neighbours' houses had been entered by thieves.

"But when you found the door bolted, why did you not ring the bell, instead of lingering about in a most suspicious manner?"

"Why," said Bates, scratching his head, "cooks is often short—very short—Mrs. Sinclair's cook is partickler so. She orders me to come at seven o'clock this morning, 'not before seven, nor yet after,' was her words."

"And you came about five."

"Well, ma'am, you see I had another job at Squire Hardy's along the road. So, knowing as cook here mostly leaves the door on the latch, I thought as I might slip in and do the chimbly, on my way. But when I found the door locked, I daren't ring the bell at five in the morning—I might ha' tried it an hour later—so I was obligated to wait."

I understood it all now: our exhortations to fasten up carefully that

night had been duly obeyed by our cook, who, doubtless, intended to rise in time to admit the sweep on this occasion. Graylands was a rambling old house, and the servants slept in quite a different quarter from that occupied by ourselves and the nursery establishment; consequently they had escaped hearing our nocturnal alarm. But what a terribly "lame and impotent conclusion" to my deed of heroism.

"You have given us all a great deal of alarm," I said severely to the unlucky Bates, acting on the proverbial legal maxim, "No case; then abuse the plaintiff's attorney."

"I don't see as how I gave alarm by waiting here on my honest business," replied the injured sweep sulkily. "And I'd like to know who's a-going to pay me for my cap as is spoiled by rolling in the mud, and my bones as is all shook into a jelly, and my 'prentice as has been chased out of sight and frightened 'most into fits."

At this juncture the door opened and disclosed a group of servants, with Maggie, serene and smiling, at their head.

"My darling Jane," she exclaimed, clasping me in her arms, "I have only just heard what an alarm you have had. But then, my dear girl, why did you not wake me? I could have told you we expected the sweeps this morning. I suppose, however, you were too frightened to think it might be only Bates."

This was too much. Maggie, timid Maggie, to be preaching coolness and presence of mind to me! And yet what an egregious goose I had been!

Kind little Maggie saw my look of mortification, and kissing me again, whispered, "Dear, brave, unselfish Jane, you only thought of saving us all from danger. I am sure few girls would have done what you did."

Peace was made with Bates by means of an excellent breakfast which cook improvised on the spot for the sweeps and gamekeepers, and I emptied my purse in "tips," for very shame. But, of course, the absurd story travelled abroad, and all the neighbourhood heard that I had run two miles in the airiest of costumes because the sweeps had come rather earlier than was expected. I am afraid my reputation for good sense hardly stood high in the vicinity of Graylands. The actual thieves were taken a few days afterwards, and this fact, added to the absurdity of our—or rather my—false alarm, effectually cured Maggie of her terrors.

We were better friends from that night. I began to see that the most sensible folks are liable to lose their heads under the influence of panic, and that I was, after all, not so much wiser than my neighbours—impressions that doubtless made me a more agreeable companion than I had been heretofore. Maggie, on her side, was all gratitude for my well-meant if mistaken zeal, and I date the beginning of a friendship that has brightened many years of my life from the adventures of that December night.

OVER THE RIVER.

OVER the river they beckon to me,
 Loved ones who've crossed to the further side ;
 The gleam of their snowy robes I see,
 But their voices are lost in the dashing tide.
 There's one with ringlets of sunny gold,
 And eyes the reflection of Heaven's own blue ;
 He crossed in the twilight, gray and cold,
 And the pale mist hid him from mortal view.
 We saw not the angels who met him there,
 The gates of the city we could not see :
 Over the river—the mystic river—
 My brother stands waiting to welcome me.

Over the river the boatman pale
 Carried another, the household pet :
 Her brown curls waved in the gentle gale—
 Darling Minnie ! I see her yet.
 She crossed on her bosom her dimpled hands,
 And fearlessly entered the phantom barque—
 We felt it glide from the silver sands,
 And all our sunshine grew strangely dark.
 We know she is safe on the further side,
 Where all the ransomed and angels be :
 Over the river—the mystic river—
 My childhood's idol is waiting for me.

For none return from those quiet shores,
 Who cross with the boatman cold and pale—
 We hear the dip of the golden oars,
 And catch a gleam of the snowy sail ;
 And lo ! they have passed from our yearning heart,
 Who cross the stream and are gone for aye.
 We may not sunder the veil apart,
 That hides from our vision the gates of day ;
 We only know that their barques no more
 May sail with us o'er life's stormy sea :
 Yet somewhere, I know, on the unseen shore,
 They watch, and beckon, and wait for me.

And I sit and think, when the sunset's gold
 Is flushing river and hill and shore,
 I shall one day stand by the water cold,
 And list for the sound of the boatman's oar ;
 I shall watch for a gleam of the flapping sail—
 I shall hear the boat as it gains the strand :
 I shall pass from sight with the boatman pale,
 To the better shore of the spirit land.*
 I shall know the loved who have gone before ;
 And joyfully sweet will the meeting be,
 When over the river—the peaceful river—
 The angel of death shall carry me.

* Since these lines were written, the author has crossed "Over the River."



THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SAFE HIDING-PLACE.

A HEAVY blow and great discouragement had just fallen upon Science, as embodied in the Museum of Natural History, that was to be the glory of Ostend, and the focus of instruction to the rest of the world. In the first place, there had been a mortality among the choicest of the live "specimens," the darlings of the naturalist's heart; in the second, a spirit of hostility to his labours, perhaps of envy at his success, had arisen in the place; and as he took no pains to conciliate anybody, and expressed opinions that might easily be construed into offence without caring who was offended, it was no difficult matter to spread a report, reflecting on the character of the Museum itself, as well as of its Director. Nervous people were terrified by stories of creatures escaping from their cages at night; sanitary alarms were excited about the methods employed in preserving the skins, and stuffing the defunct specimens; and when it was discovered that the proposed improvements of the town positively required the demolition of the obnoxious premises, the doom of the great institution was sealed. Dr. Thaddeus, with true philosophic carelessness, having neglected to attend to his tenure, there was no difficulty in serving him with a peremptory notice to quit; which was received much in the spirit with which a Border chieftain might have accepted a hint from the law to desist from raids on his neighbours.

The mediæval expedient of making the messenger of an intrusive document devour the parchment, seals and all, not being available in the present instance, Dr. Thaddeus could only relieve his soul with

the help of his pen ; and wrote a letter to the authorities, which it is hoped they carefully stored among their archives. His spirits slightly cheered by this feat, he plunged into the task of packing up his treasures for deportation ; and had got through more work than a couple of journeymen would have considered a fair day's labour, when his maidservant looked cautiously in, to ask if he would see a visitor. "Certainly—when the Museum is re-opened," was the reply, in a tone of deadly blandness. "It is closed at present on account of improvements."

It was some one on particular business, who brought an introduction, and said he *must* see the doctor himself.

"Oh, indeed ! Well, anyone who must see the doctor may come in at the window if he pleases—no one is admitted at the door."

The reply was given literally, and as literally acted upon ; for while Dr. Thaddeus was stooping over one of his packages, the light was suddenly darkened behind him, and Paul's small active figure, forcing up the half-opened sash, leaped boldly into the apartment.

"I have brought you this note, sir, if you please."

The doctor pleased ! It seemed too ridiculous to argue about, so Dr. Thaddeus took the note, as if to see how far absurdity would go. One glance at its contents was enough to mollify his irate mood. Signing to his visitor to take a seat, he sat down opposite, caressing his chin, and staring at him through his spectacles.

"So !" he observed at last. "I have heard of you, and about you, but I never saw you before. What made you come to me ?"

"I did not know what to do for the best, sir. I was put upon that there job by my master, so I had to do it ; and by watching and listening, I made out something that seemed dangerous to the young lady. There's a claim upon her money ; and they think, if the Professor finds that out, he may do something desperate to get hold of it. Mr. Nathan, who was there about Cairngorm, advised me to make the best of my way to you, sir."

"You call that the best of your way, do you ? Let us have a look at those papers. Nathan was quite right ; I know all about it, and a great deal more than your professor has an idea of. He a magician, indeed ! If he had no means of mischief beyond his science, he would be harmless enough. As it is, I keep an eye upon him."

Paul produced the packet, which he had secured in several wrappings of wash-leather. "Where do you mean to keep it, sir ?" he asked. "I warn you, there is no place safe from him."

"I'll make shift to beat him this once," said Dr. Thaddeus. "Look at this case, my young friend. I had in it the most perfect specimen of his genus that I ever saw—his habits were a fund of inexhaustible interest—but it was difficult to keep him in health, and he died young—deeply regretted. I am not likely to replace him for the present, and no coffer could be safer from inquisitive eyes. We'll put your deposit in there till I can attend to it."

So said, so done : and, labelled with the name and quality of the deceased serpent, the papers prepared for fresh adventures under a terrible name. Paul rubbed his hands in great satisfaction.

"If there is a thing the Professor has a horror of, it is one of those creatures. He would go a mile out of his way sooner than meet one."

"Very good," said the doctor, grimly ; "let him keep out of mine. Now then, what are you going to do?"

"You haven't a serpent's skin I could slip into, I'm afraid, sir. I shall feel safe in nothing else."

"Don't be too sure. You want to escape from your master?"

"I must, sir. I held on, because I could not help it, and I could watch him best that way ; but if he got hold of me now, his first thought would be to worm out this secret, and he has tricks I can't yet see through, so Miss Emily would never be safe. I must hide ; but unless I take to diving, I can't think where it will be."

"You shall be as safe as the child herself was while she was with me," said the doctor, stroking his chin reflectively, and looking about him. "Aye, aye, that will do—that will do. To-night you sleep here as my guest—you help me, if you choose, to pack my treasures of natural history—I am leaving a thankless country for ever, and have to fix my tent elsewhere—and I will pass you on among my brethren, with orders that you are taken care of, till we find you a berth where you can make your way. Trust the old man—he has friends everywhere ; and, as one of them, you will always meet with another at your back."

Paul willingly accepted the offered protection : and he showed so much deftness and quick apprehension in the services he was allowed to render the doctor and his treasures, that Dr. Thaddeus only regretted he could not keep him altogether. But though this would have been too perilous, he resolved that Paul's peculiar gifts should not be lost to the cause ; and an introduction he subsequently gave him, to one of his kindred in the East, nearly as keen a naturalist as himself, bade fair to keep those active limbs of his in full activity for some years to come—during which period our story loses sight of him.

So Paul Rocket disappeared, and the museum at Ostend was removed. Dr. Thaddeus left no address behind him, and nobody knew where he was gone. His servants had been discharged, and all links with that ungrateful watering-place were effectually broken. The only person who heard anything was Miss Joseph, to whom, much to her surprise, five-and-twenty pounds were to be paid half yearly by Mr. Lazarus on account of salary. On her attempting to remonstrate, she was told such were Dr. Thaddeus's orders, and no one dared to disobey them.

It will not be forgotten, all this while, that Lewis Frankland was spending some of his holidays at Folkestone, as Mr. Bourne's guest ;

and it is time we returned to him. What is he doing this lovely afternoon, sitting by himself on the shore, with a book in his hand, which he does not read, and a cloud gathering over his good-humoured face each time he looks at his watch? He is learning a lesson, which only experience can teach him; and, it may be, the conning of that holiday task may decide the fortunes of his life.

Mr. Bourne, who had been for his usual stroll and chat with friends on the pier, came upon his visitor as he was putting back his watch for the twentieth time, and hailed him in some surprise, asking what he had done with Cecilia.

"What has she done with me, you had better ask, sir. We were to meet here at three o'clock, to go for a sail, and it is now five."

"Too bad, upon my word! She went to lunch with the Palmers, I believe; and those are ladies who think it fine to be unpunctual. I hoped Cecilia knew better: but, as I have got you alone, I'll just sit down with you a bit. I want to ask you a question."

Lewis assisted him to take a seat on a rock, sheltered from the sun, and waited his pleasure, though with a wandering attention, and an occasional glance at his watch.

"You have no fancy for India, Frankland, have you?"

"None at all, sir. I like my profession, and can follow it best in England."

"Do you imagine you will ever make a good thing of it?"

"I am ambitious enough to hope I may; a well-taught lad is a very good thing."

"How much will your lads remember out of all you drive into their heads? But, granted that they retain it all, how many years will it be before you can begin to lay by?"

"Begin to lay by, sir? I never spend all my income."

"I am glad to hear it; you look forward to settling some day."

"And very soon, I hope, sir; for I am horribly unsettled just now. There, I won't look at my watch again; I have learned my lesson, and know, once for all, that I have been not only an idiot, but a bore into the bargain."

"Young men are generally more ready to own the one than the other," said Mr. Bourne, drily.

"Because they have sense enough not to be both at once. I suppose I have been such a bore with my lessons that Miss Wilmot can stand it no longer. I am glad I see how it is, and I can take the hint."

"She seemed very keen on everything you told her; her application took me by surprise."

"It deceived me, sir, and that is my only excuse; but I can quite understand that it grew wearisome—and there is an end of it."

Mr. Bourne was silent; his annoyance was great. Sincerely anxious for Cecilia's welfare, he had hoped, from the sudden growth of intimacy between them, that she might find her happiness

in the affection of a young man of Frankland's well-established character, notwithstanding the smallness of his means. He had therefore noticed complacently the thirst for knowledge which had seemed to consume Miss Wilmot, and the ready zeal with which the young master filled the cup for her lips.

And Lewis had found it a very engaging occupation, and was insensibly much more flattered by her deference and eagerness to learn than he would have liked to own. But the last two or three days had seen a change: other friends had arrived, and her zeal had slackened. This afternoon was to have been devoted to a scientific expedition on the water, to collect marine curiosities, and she was to hear all he could tell her about them. Lewis had waited a couple of hours for her appearance, and was opening his eyes to the unpleasant reality that both his teaching and himself had become tiresome.

An approaching step made both the gentlemen look round, when they perceived the unexpected form of Ernest Archdale. A few words sufficed to explain that on his return to town he found his mother looking so ill he had persuaded her to have a week at the sea. So they had come down to Folkestone.

They were equally struck by his weary look, as he took a place between them, telling Frankland he had not expected to see him spending the afternoon like an invalid come for sea breezes.

"He has been wasting it on an ungrateful girl, who is amusing herself elsewhere," said Mr. Bourne; "and I hope it will be the last time. Did you chance to see anything of Cecilia on your way, Archdale?"

"I did," he replied. "She was in an open carriage."

"The Palmers', of course," said Mr. Bourne.

"I did not know the ladies. Major Palmer was in it."

"Major Palmer? Is *he* here? That accounts for it all. Well!" added the old gentleman, as he drew a deep breath, "we have all our cares, but no man knows the worst till he has allowed himself to be made a young lady's guardian. I hope Miss Granard may have a gentler experience than mine."

"She has counted the cost, and is prepared to pay it," said Ernest, firmly, "and so am I. It will involve some sacrifice, much waiting, but to that we have made up our minds. In the meanwhile, I am come to invoke your kindness, Mr. Bourne. I do not care what I do, or where I go; but if you can put me in the way of realising something like competence in ten years ——"

"You may do it in less time than that, as I told your mother, if you have a little capital to throw into business."

"I have been consulting her on that point," said Ernest, his thin cheeks flushing slightly, "but I find—don't go, Frankland; it is no secret from a friend like you—that our affairs are in worse order than I knew; and as my wilfulness, leading to my accident, was one cause of it, I must fetch up the loss by my own labour."

He did not tell the worst—that he had received an anonymous note, in writing he believed to be Cosmo Dangerfield's, cautioning him that his signature had been turned to more account than he was perhaps aware of, and advising him to look into his own affairs before he undertook those of other people. He had at once showed it to his mother, believing it to be only an attempt at annoyance, and she had fallen into a fit of passionate emotion, confessing that she had been over-persuaded, when he was too weak to know what he was doing, into obtaining his signature to a transfer of shares, which had never been re-invested, but had been nearly swallowed up by her embarrassments. How Cosmo Dangerfield knew of the transaction she had no idea; she had answered an advertisement, and was taken in. Since then she had lived with a sword over her head.

And so Ernest told Mr. Bourne that he was prepared to go to India or the Colonies for a time, leaving his mother with Mrs. Raymond, and devoting himself wholly to the repair of their fortunes. With what they had left, and the proceeds of his commission, she would be provided for, and he could live on a small salary, and work and save for years without a murmur, if only he had a fair hope of succeeding in time.

"I understand all that, young fellow," observed Mr. Bourne in answer, "but it does not seem to strike you that you should have thought of all this before you made your engagement. I am afraid"—he looked keenly at Ernest—"you acted under a hasty impulse, and that you feel you have done an imprudent thing. Is there anything an old man can do to help you out of it?"

"The wisest action of the wisest life, Mr. Bourne, could not exceed the wisdom of my present choice: though I may never live to realise what a prize I have won."

"That will do; I quite understand. Now then, I want you two young gentlemen to attend to me; and in what I am going to say, I hardly need observe that if you were *not* gentlemen to the backbone I should think twice before I said it. I am a young lady's guardian, as you know, and you know her; and you may know, if you choose, that her fortune is not at all large, and that to be a rich woman she must depend on my being sufficiently pleased with her choice to give her a daughter's portion. She will have one, when I see her won by a man whom I can respect and trust; and I think sufficiently well of you both to own that either of you would have found me ready to meet your views—simply because I know your characters. Now I have just heard of an opening in India: a cousin of mine wants just such an accountant as you are, Archdale; and is particular in requiring a gentleman. The berth is a very good one, and, as such, I was suggesting it to the dominie here, thinking he might have reasons of his own for wishing to get on in the world. How do you feel towards it, Frankland? You will

find your bookwork tell out there—languages, arithmetic, and all. Will you try it?”

“Thank you from my heart, Mr. Bourne; but I cannot give up my boys; and nothing would pay me for the loss of my English hills and streams.”

“Nothing? Then there is no more to be said, and the offer goes to Archdale. There!” striking his palm into Ernest’s, “not a word more about it now. I am going to see the steamer come in, and perhaps you will look in this evening. Mrs. Bourne will call on your mother to-morrow, and ask her to dinner properly.”

With a quick nod, cutting short all reply, he left the two young men together.

Archdale was the first to speak. “Frankland, if you have any wishes in that direction you must not let scruples on my account stand in your way.”

“I have no wishes that would send me out of reach of Comber Court. Who is that Major Palmer, by the way?”

A slight curl of Ernest’s lip betrayed emotion, in spite of his calmness. “You remember the story of Cairngorm?”

“You don’t mean *he* is the man, after all she ——” Frankland stopped himself. He would not go on.

Their conversation, as they walked towards Ernest’s lodgings, turned principally on the proposed enterprise of the latter. All coldness between them had entirely disappeared; Lewis seemed only anxious now to show that he did the other justice.

The impression made on his own mind was peculiarly painful. He had really believed that Cecilia Wilmot had been the victim of thoughtless unkindness on the part of others, that she had been almost forced to play a heartless part sooner than expose herself to unfeeling surmises or sarcastic jesting. So much of this had been implied in her confidences, that he had pitied and consoled her, liking her all the better for what she had suffered; and till this moment he had been inclined to think Ernest had been a severe judge of one so amiable. But that she should be driving with the man Palmer, whose attentions she had professed to have found so distressing, and at an hour when she had appointed to sail with himself, staggered even Lewis’s good-nature, and served to decide his plans. Before Miss Wilmot appeared at the dinner-table, he had made his arrangements for leaving.

Cecilia’s first glance at him gave her a slight shock, for she never liked to lose an ally, and she saw emancipation in the quiet manner with which he accepted her excuses. But her head was full of something else at that moment; and his value had fallen in her estimation. Without feeling the slightest affection for Major Palmer, she had been flattered and excited by the renewal of his homage, and the expectation of what might soon follow; and her liveliness and grace never appeared in more charming colours than during the first part of the

evening. She sang Lewis's favourite songs and played his pet waltzes directly he asked for them, and in her most winning manner turned to receive his thanks, as a proof that she was forgiven and would be received back as a pupil to-morrow. But he shook his head, with a graver smile than she had ever seen him wear.

"I wished to hear those sweet things once more, that I might carry their sound away with me. Your education has passed out of my hands, Miss Wilmot; and I thank you for your share in mine."

He moved away as he spoke, and soon after left the room. In the morning, when she came down to breakfast, he had been gone some hours.

"Gone! of course he is, and quite right too," was Mr. Bourne's comment. "I should have recommended him a change, had he not proposed it."

She read her guardian's meaning, and said no more, though her pretty lips pouted expressively. By and by, she announced, with evident satisfaction, that she was going to dine with the Palmers.

"We expect the Archdales: do you wish to avoid them?"

"Oh dear no; there can be no occasion to wish that. I shall not be missed, you know."

"I am afraid that is too true, my dear," observed Mr. Bourne, gravely. "I don't often worry you with advice, and you have as much of your own way as most girls; but I am rather uneasy about you, and I must say I don't like the way you go on."

"Dear sir, I am very sorry for that. I will stay at home and meet the Archdales, if it is any pleasure to you or them."

"I don't care a fig about your staying at home; and you know that, without my telling you. I only give you my advice—an old man's warning. Trifling in joke is all very well, Cecilia, but trifling in earnest cuts up hearts by the roots, and they do not spring up at every turn. I have seen you miss two such chances of honest happiness as you may never come across again; and your happiness is dearer to me than anyone's is to you. Think of what I have said."

Very heartily did Cecilia cry for some minutes when he left her, and very miserable did she own herself to be. It was quite true: she had trifled, and always should trifle—it was her nature; but how could she help it, when the only man she cared for had treated her so cruelly? And she was expected to wish him joy of his engagement to another, and receive him at dinner as if nothing had ever been spoken between them!

"No," summed up the young lady to herself. "The Major thinks all I say is clever, and all I do is right. It can do no harm to listen to him; and Ernest Archdale, at any rate, will not think I am breaking my heart."

So she compromised the matter by paying Mrs. Archdale a visit, to explain that a prior engagement would prevent her staying at

home to meet her in the evening; and was shocked to see how ill and unhappy she looked.

"Do not waste your pity on me, my dear," said the lady, when Cecilia expressed her sympathy; "or, if you must be compassionate, turn your regrets in the right direction. True, my son is going to India, and that is trouble in itself; but when he entered the army, I was prepared to find him ordered away to dangers of all kinds. But it *is* hard to think that there was one person in the world in whose hands the joy and comfort of my son's life was placed for a little while; just long enough for her to make it a plaything, and then throw it carelessly away!"

"Oh, Mrs. Archdale! How can you be so cruel?"

"Child, it is not often you hear the truth on this subject, and for once it must be spoken. He did love you at one time, and you know it; and had you used him well all would have been different now. But for you he would never have injured his health and been obliged to quit his profession; and—perhaps——" She stopped short, checking the words she would have said. Cecilia had grown very pale; her look of anguish touched the mother's heart.

"Forgive me, child; I have little right to say such things. I have been much to blame myself; it is fit I should suffer."

"What is that you are saying, mother?" interrupted Ernest, who came in at the moment. "If I did not hope to build up your future, do you think I would leave you at all?"

"Are we to offer you our congratulations?" said Miss Wilmot, trying to be quite at her ease. "It is difficult now to word them properly."

"Wish me patience, resolution, and industry, if you cannot wish me joy. I shall want them all: but such kindness as Mr. Bourne's shall not be wasted if I can help it."

Cecilia Wilmot's heart ached as if it would burst: she realised, now he was hopelessly lost, how little she cared for anything in the world compared with his affection. His mother's words had stung her to the core, for she knew they were simple truth. Her guardian, far from opposing their union, would have made all smooth; and even if India had still been Ernest's destination, she might have been preparing for what seemed now the one thing worth living for: to follow him through the world.

When Cecilia rose to take leave, she found that he was going to walk part of the way with her. But she was not prepared for his asking her, in his gentlest manner, as they went along, to forgive a liberty he was about to take in offering her a word of advice. He might have offered a great deal at that moment without giving her offence; nor was her flush one of anger when it proved to be a caution against Major Palmer—an intimation that his character was such as must repel all trust and esteem.

"I should not have spoken," added Ernest, "but for believing

that your happiness may be at stake, Miss Wilmot. For that happiness I would do much: and you will always have my most fervent wishes for it, let me be where I may."

"Don't waste any thought or wishes upon it in future," she cried bitterly. "It is not of the least consequence what becomes of me—and you care as little as I do."

There was a short silence before Ernest spoke again, with evident emotion.

"If I have done you injustice, forgive me," he breathed, breaking the silence.

She gave one long impatient sigh. "It will be time enough for that when I forgive myself. You have been very unkind; but I dare say I deserved it; and you will forget all about me when ——"

Her voice broke down; and as she unconsciously stood still, gazing out upon the sea, the tears filled her eyes. It was a perilous moment, from which she was only saved by a peril greater still. Gay voices were heard, and Major Palmer and one of his sisters approached, with an eager invitation to Cecilia to join them in a sail. Conscious of having shown her weakness, she made a desperate effort to appear gay and unconcerned; and the sound of her laugh, as she turned away with her friends, rang sadly in Ernest's ears for many a day.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A SEVEN YEARS' PEACE.

EARLY one morning, when Justine went down to light her kitchen fire, she found it already kindled, and Mowatt making coffee at the dresser. Astounded at the first moment, the second restored her self-possession.

"M. le docteur! You here!——you should have let me do this for you. I have been hoping to see you return."

"The chances were against my returning," was the doctor's answer; "but I must see the Professor on business. Thank you; I prefer my own coffee even to yours, Justine. Is Paul up yet?"

"Paul!" repeated Justine. "Does M. le docteur not know, then, that the poor child went off on a journey, and has not been heard of since? I never lay my head down at night without fancying I hear him trying to come in. If he does not show himself soon, I shall give the Professor notice. I am afraid some mischief has come to him."

"I should think that very probable, Justine. But are you sure his master does not know more about him than you do?"

"That is just what I want to find out, sir; and, with your help, perhaps I may. You will wait until monsieur is dressed?"

"Not if I can help it. What time do you call him?"

"He takes a cup of coffee at seven, and rises soon after. Shall I announce M. le docteur?"

"You may as well. But——look here, Justine; I have been travelling all night, and am tired to death; have you any brandy?"

Justine had none at hand; monsieur had the keys of cellar and sideboard; but she would run round to the public-house for some, if the doctor pleased. The doctor did please, and gave her money for the purpose; and as soon as she was gone, he poured out a cup of the hot coffee, and carried it up on a tray to Cosmo Dangerfield's door.

The tap of the tray being a familiar sound, the door was at once unbolted; and Mowatt was by his former employer's bedside before he was recognised. A thrill of dismay passed through the Professor's frame in the first surprise; for he was conscious of having done quite enough to make an enemy of his confederate. But Mowatt's face had nothing threatening in it; and, as he sat down by the bed, he observed it was not the first tray he had handled by many, only his patients were generally better pleased to see him.

"I had my pass-key," he explained, in answer to the Professor's look of distrust; "and as Justine was not downstairs, I made my own breakfast. To tell you the truth, I have stolen another march on her at this moment, that I might have a word with you without being overheard."

"You made this coffee, did you?"

"Yes, and drank a cup myself, before bringing it to you. It amuses me to see your suspicions. My dear fellow, if *I* took to Justine's tricks, it would be in a very different medium."

"What has brought you back from the North?" asked Dangerfield, rather ashamed of his alarm, and stirring the coffee with a critical air. "Are your virtuous friends tired of you?——or could you no longer keep up the farce?"

"Neither the one nor the other. I am safe now for regular employment, and am in no hurry to throw it away. My errand is a special one to yourself."

"Ah, indeed! They begin to think it may be worth while to do me justice, perhaps? It is high time."

"My errand is my own, not theirs. I am in great trouble about a paper that must have been stolen from me, in which you are especially interested. And I suspect the thief was your boy, Paul Rocket."

Mowatt had his eye on the listener's face, taking note of its every line and shade with professional acuteness; and he saw that this was news to him. The Professor looked perplexed. If Paul had done this, why had he not been the first to announce it?

"What paper could you have, my good friend, that concerned me?" he asked, with partial incredulity.

"One that was entrusted to me by your wife, Mrs. Dangerfield. It was left to my discretion how to use it, and I think it right now

that you should know its purport. Of course you remember that it was at your own request I attended your wife; and that you were anxious I should lose no opportunity of representing your claims."

"I am quite aware, my dear Mowatt, of my obligation to your skill and friendship; and shall be ready to prove my sense of it when I am able."

"As you are aware, Miss Stormount is residuary legatee; and if she should die before coming of age, you are the next heir. After her majority, the fortune is entirely at her own disposal."

"I know all that; and Lazarus has it all at his fingers' ends. Don't remind me of my one chance oftener than you can help, Mowatt."

"As to that, any insurance office would see that nothing could make the child's life much safer than such an arrangement. Your worst enemies could not wish you a more appalling position than would be yours, should anything happen to Emily Stormount that could not be at once accounted for."

"You talk as if melodramatic stepfathers were as common off the stage as on it," said the Professor, attempting a look of amusement: but the warning was well aimed, and Mowatt saw it had taken effect.

"Yes," he added, musingly, "the first person suspected would be the one who profited by the death: yourself; especially under the peculiar circumstances of the case. But as I trust the young lady will grow up and live long, it may be a satisfaction to you to feel that her majority may bring you a substantial proof of your wife's tenderness—provided that paper be recovered."

"It will be recovered, never fear," said Cosmo, eagerly. "Can you tell me its purport?"

"It is a request from the mother to her child, to provide liberally for her dear husband."

The Professor's eyes glittered. "Why did you not tell me this before?"

"I was not bound to do so; and if the paper had not been stolen, I should not have told you now. That Paul Rocket had been there, we were convinced; but it was in disguise, and he escaped us all. When I could not trace him anywhere, I decided to come to you."

"I am much obliged to you, my dear fellow; it shall be seen to. I gave the young scamp a holiday, and had no idea he would be after such game; but when his money is spent, we shall have him coming back, and then we shall nail him. By the way, you saw this Miss Granard—do you think she is as handsome as people say?"

"She is certainly handsome," said Mowatt: and the blood rushed through his veins with sudden vehemence.

"And engaged to young Archdale?"

"So it is said; but he is going to India, and may be away for years."

"They seemed to think at one time of a speedy marriage, and all

living together. His mother thought it probable. A very judicious, sensible woman is Mrs. Archdale."

"Ah!" said Mowatt, lifting his eyebrows, for the praise was ominous from such lips; "the plan would have suited you, no doubt; but it is at an end for the present. Here comes Justine, to convict me of trespassing. Come in, my good woman; I cannot persuade the Professor that my coffee is as good as yours."

"I have been servant to monsieur longer than you have, M. le docteur; and I hope I have served him well," was the reply: "but I begin to think it is time to provide for myself, now that people are sent on secret journeys, and do not come back."

"What is the grievance now?" asked her master. "Mowatt, you will stay to breakfast, of course?"

Mowatt thanked him, but declined. He had business to attend to, and would call another time. He exchanged a few words with Justine at the door, and slipped a gratuity into her hand. It so took her by surprise that when her master, who had by this time risen, and was seated at his desk in his dressing-gown, called her back, she was still gazing at the coin.

"I should as soon have thought to get money out of the door-post, as out of the doctor. Has he found a mine?—or drawn a prize in a lottery, for example?"

"He expects something in return, old woman—that is the secret," said the Professor, without turning his head. "What was it you were threatening to do just now?—and what did you mean by it?"

Justine's apron was at her eyes. *She* never threatened, not she—a poor hardworked old servant, who had nothing but charity to fall back upon when her strength failed her; but she did think it was a strange thing that the lad, who had brought so much money, by his cleverness, into the house, should be missing, and no one seem to care. Poor as she was, she would give a quarter's wages to know he was safe; and, what was more—if anything happened to him that couldn't be explained, her conscience would not let her sit still. The poor boy hinted more than once that he was afraid of his master; and it might prove to be with reason.

"With very good reason," assented the Professor, still writing, "if he played me false; but I hope better things of him. I am as anxious for his return as you can be, Justine; and, to prove it, I will give you a better reward than the doctor's when you can tell me he is come home. He is presuming on my good-nature in giving him a holiday."

"Monsieur gave him a holiday?" exclaimed the old woman, a strange light in her bleared eyes. "It was for a holiday he wore a wig, and altered his poor face till his own mother would not have known him?"

"That was necessary for his own protection. I told you so."

"Ah, bah!" retorted she, with a grimace, "when monsieur takes

that trouble for anyone's protection but his own, we may make soup out of London paving-stones. Monsieur promises me a reward if Paul comes home; I can promise *him* that if Paul is not here soon, safe and sound, he may suit himself with a servant, for such doings won't suit old Justine."

"Oh, the doctor has offered you a better situation?—I understand, my good woman. Go down now, and remember what I have said. No one who serves me well ever goes unrewarded—no one who plays me false is ever out of reach of my hand. Go!"

She stood still a moment, mumbling and muttering; then obeyed his order to depart; and the mask, which her master's face always wore before others, fell as the door closed behind her.

"It must be true, or Mowatt would never have come back to tell me," ran his musings. "He knows it is not his interest to break with me, and he has a sort of claim, if my wife wrote that letter under his influence. I must get him to back me in letting Lazarus and Co. into the secret: it will be worth something when I want to raise more funds—as they take care I shall, horse-leeches that they are! What Mowatt says is true enough; that child's life ought to be precious to me, of all men, for it would be said I had practised on her health in order to get the money. The boy must be hiding on Mowatt's account, and will not come out of it till he is out of the way. I can do without him for the present; and meanwhile it is a settled thing that I am an affectionate though ill-used stepfather—and Emily's peace is my first consideration. I will write her a fatherly letter, and send her a trinket. I can bide my time, when necessary; and there are ways and means of reaching her ear, without any undue risk."

The fatherly letter—a very clever composition—was accordingly written, and sent under cover to Miss Granard, with a few courteous lines, expressing the hope that, while acquiescing in the separation, he might not be looked upon as otherwise than a friend to his lamented wife's daughter, however mistaken he might have been in his method of treatment. There was an implied apology, and regret for the past, and an intimation of amity for the future, which Miss Granard accepted as far as it went; answering the letter with guarded politeness. Sir Marcus agreed with her in thinking it was more wholesome for the child to be taught to think of her stepfather kindly, than as a lion in the thicket, against whom she must be on her guard; and Emily began to pity "the poor Professor," with a gentle compassion that went far to cure her nerves of their mysterious dread. He took care not to break the armistice by any attempts at annoyance.

"The years soon fly past," was his consolatory reflection, "and she shall make all up to me when once she is of age."

Years do fly with wonderful swiftness, as everybody finds out at some period of life; and, above all, when their course is smooth and

peaceful, so that little occurs to mark the rate of speed. A long period of such tranquillity was in store for Emily Stormount, after the agitations and perils of her childhood. And the years passed happily by—leaving nothing to record but what belongs to the safe and healthy growth of the body and mind. We shall use the dramatist's licence, and suppose the curtain has fallen, to be lifted again after an interval of seven years.

The changes that we have to witness are only such as might have been looked for; the hand of Time has not been idle, but his work, in some instances, has been that of a conscientious artist, never weary of adding a finishing touch. The scene opens on another holiday, passing in a quiet corner of the south-east of England, where a party of lads, with their tutor, are dividing the hours of the long summer day between a small amount of vigorous reading, and a large one of still more vigorous exercise. These are Lewis Frankland and a select number of elder pupils, whom he has undertaken to prepare for important examinations; and so popular has he become among the youth of his training, that he might have had double the number, had he so pleased. There he lies under the tree, apart from his boys.

A cricket match had been organised, and the tutor was watching it at his ease in the shade, when a lounging step on the turf made him raise his head, and recognise, with a dubious expression of countenance, a young man approaching his resting-place.

"So you have come, after all!" was his resentful greeting. "I thought I was plain enough in my language to satisfy anybody."

"I am perfectly satisfied, my excellent friend," said the newcomer, as he stretched himself beside Frankland on the grass: "you cannot manage to undertake me, and I cannot manage unless you do, so there is no more to be said."

"No more to be said, but a great deal to be done. Have you tried again to pass?"

"I should think I had, and failed at every conceivable point—arithmetic, geography, and grammar. What more would you have?"

"It is hard to say. What do you think I shall be able to do for you under such untoward circumstances? You had better go for six months to a National school."

"Don't be vicious, governor: when a case looks desperate, you call in the best advice; and Cecilia said she was sure you would not refuse me. I own I was awfully cut up when I had to tell her of my utter smash, and hers was the first word of cheering anyone had given me. It will be the making of me if you can push me through."

"Mrs. Palmer advised your coming to me?"

"As strongly as she could put it; she said there was no one like you for cleverness and good-nature. You are right to bow after such a compliment; but, poor soul, good-nature is one of those qualities which she finds apt to run short, and so she values it accordingly."

"Is she not happy?" asked Lewis, hastily.

"Well—it is not for me to tell tales out of school. But though Palmer is my own cousin, I have no acute feelings on the subject; and his temper can be very nasty. It has been much more so ever since he got into that scrape about the Milwood races, and some one brought up the story of Cairngorm. He has taken it into his head that it was her fault—that she had been talking of it—and he has never behaved decently to her since. He is a little ashamed to let me see it, and is rather more amiable when I am by: but he won't ask me too often, and I can't be always inviting myself, you see."

"I see. Well, Tracy, I will try what I can do for you; but you must remember these are the holidays, and I have my hands pretty full already. If you will work in earnest, I will put you in the way; but I have not time to cram or to coax you."

"All right," was young Tracy's reply, as he pulled out a cigar case, and offered of its contents to his unwilling tutor. The latter eyed them attentively, and observed, "You must make your plucking answer, to supply yourself with articles of this price, Tracy."

"I hate anything that is not the best of its kind; and they say the dearest are always cheaper in the end."

"That depends on who pays for them."

"Oh, somebody will pay for me some day or other. The stars have foretold that I shall make a rich marriage. Don't laugh: it is a fact, I assure you. I had my what's-its-name cast the other day; and heard ten-shillings' worth of the most wonderful twinkle-twinkle stuff that ever was spoken. Have you never heard of Dangerfield, the spiritualist and astrologer?"

"Yes: but not lately. I thought he was in America."

"He is just come back from it, and they say he knows some curious secrets. I am not sure he has not found out how to make gold, though he only smiled when I asked him, and told me I should see for myself some day. When I told Cecilia that, she said it was nothing to what she knew of him already."

"Very likely. If any man could play Dousterswivel to perfection, I have no doubt he would."

"Douster-what?" asked the candidate for Civil Service, much too well-read to know anything about Walter Scott.

"Never mind, Tracy; we will not press you too hard at first. Will you try your hand with the youngsters there? They are looking after recruits, if you want active service."

Tracy shook his head, and half closed his eyes. Nothing was a pleasure that made you hot and gave you trouble; and on being cross-questioned as to his tastes, it appeared that he carried out this theory in all his amusements and occupations, carefully avoiding anything to do. To Lewis Frankland his arrival was no small perplexity; and but for the appeal in Cecilia Palmer's name, he would probably have declined it altogether.

He and she had never met since that time at Folkestone : soon after which her engagement to Major Palmer was announced, and was speedily followed by her marriage. Reports reached Lewis through Comber Court that Mr. Bourne had disliked her choice, and there had been considerable disappointment touching the amount of her fortune; but the Major was ordered to Gibraltar, and his wife went with him; and how she fared in her wedded life was a matter of conjecture for some little time. Disaster, however, seemed to dog their path; the Major's dealings with younger officers, however skilfully veiled, attracted attention; one thing came out after another; and, at last, an official intimation was given him, that he had better retire from the service. He did so; and, on the loss of position and income, became still more unscrupulous; until, as this young kinsman of his had just mentioned, an exposé of sharp ungentlemanly practice led to further revelations, and to his name being handled after a fashion that is very difficult for a wife to bear. How much Cecilia Palmer had to bear, or had already borne, no one knew but herself. Lewis's kind heart ached as he thought of the bright face, that he had liked to watch in its quick changes of feeling, saddened, darkened it might be, by the ill-treatment of an almost desperate man.

He did not like to ask further particulars, though Tracy seemed to have no scruples about communicating them; neither was he in tune for the eager mirth of his boys. After a short silence, during which the new pupil had nearly dropped asleep, he rose from the turf, and strode rapidly away towards the village, where they had their apartments. Had any letters arrived? No—but a telegram had. His eyes flashed with eagerness; it was the announcement he had been hoping for. His friends, detained in London on account of Sir Marcus's eyes, were coming down, that Adela Granard and Emily might visit the property in the neighbourhood belonging to the latter. An hour or two later he was at the little station, with a warm welcome for the party.

The village boasted a good, old-fashioned inn, which held its own in a quiet way, notwithstanding the downfall of so many of higher pretensions; and there was a sense of great refreshment and rest in reaching it, after three weeks of heat, noise, and anxiety in London. Of anxiety no one spoke until Kate and Lewis were alone for a moment, when his affectionate questioning brought the dew into her eyes, as she returned the pressure of his hand. "They give hopes, but he has gone through a great deal, and it requires all his patience, though he never complains. Oh, Lewis, how good he is; and to think of his ever being helpless, and dependent on others!"

"I hope better things from his London colleagues. But even if he were, Kate, he has ministering hands always ready to supply his wants. I should ask no kinder angel myself, though I should prefer having my eyes open."

"For shame, Lewis; when *you* take to poetical compliments, I shall wonder what will happen next."

"What do you suppose *will* happen in some six months time?"

"Christmas holidays, generally speaking."

"Exactly so; a good long holiday to our head-master. Morley has given notice that he means to retire."

"Have they chosen him a successor?"

"Not quite; but the chances are great that Redmond, under-master, will be the man—and in such a case, Redmond's house and berth will be vacant."

"A very good berth, is it not?"

"By no means a bad one; and, when vacant, I am promised the refusal. And Kate, what do you think was my first dream, when I heard this?"

"How should I your first dream know from any other man's?" retorted Kate, a bright tint on her cheek.

"As you have so long been the centre of my waking thoughts, you might imagine what I should dream about. My only fear now is that those precious eyes of your father will want you—not more intensely than mine do, Kate, but with a prior claim. Still, I must know how much you can give me to hope upon. If I have a home to put you in at last, will you ——"

He had drawn her so near to his lips while speaking that the rest was lost, and her first reply was equally indistinct in utterance, though he seemed to make out its meaning. Kate Combermere, in fact, had not nerve, or self-restraint, in that exquisite moment, to resist the joy his avowal gave her; but before he had had time to whisper more than a few ardent sentences of thanks and devotion, she laid her hand on his shoulder, and looked steadfastly in his face.

"You have been as his own kith and kin so long, Lewis, that I have perfect trust in your love for him. He can never be left alone."

"I know it; I said so. It is not to-day, nor to-morrow, that I may hope to carry you off; but I want to have a right to say you are mine."

"Will that content you for the present?"

"Not in the least; but it will give me hopes of more some day. If you could only imagine how I have been waiting for a chance even of this!"

If Kate were secretly conscious that he need not have waited so long, she knew also that nothing would have made him speak while he had nothing adequate to offer her. And now he knew, as he might have known long before, that she loved him dearly —— and that she could not leave her father.

"We may be old and grey-headed, remember, before we can carry out your plans," she said, half laughing, half in tears, "and it will end in your finding it wearisome at last, when you have nowhere to

go for the holidays. But come now: we have left my dear father long enough to make him suspect something, and I am not sure that he ought to hear anything to-night, before he has had time to rest."

"I shall leave you to attend to him, then, for I must see after my boys. Oh, Kate, my darling, if you only knew what a world of strength and joy you have put into my heart! Mind this—your promise does not hang on the school nominations. If this does not answer I'll find something else. You are mine now—mine! and I'll win you, God helping me, if I have to go as far as Archdale had, to smooth difficulties away!"

As he left the room, and she stood looking after him, with swimming eyes, a well-known step behind her made her involuntarily start, though with no sense of wrong-doing. Her father had entered from an inner apartment, and could not help understanding the last words. A tender question brought a frank answer, for she knew it was the wish of his heart; and that her only difficulty would lie in the unselfishness of the one, and the independence of the other. Her anxious care to assure Sir Marcus that he was not going to be left made him smile, a little gravely; while he assured her, in return, that he did not suspect her of any such design.

"I always looked upon Lewis as a marvel of prudent reticence, considering what an impetuous fellow he is; and it strikes me that, now he has spoken, he has not much more reason for it than he had long ago. But whether he carries his point or not, I fear your patience will be tried between us, my dear, unless we turn the Court into a school, and put you both at the head of it."

"We will try the experiment on his reading-party, father, and see how we should get on. After the wonderful way you pulled me through that Christmas gathering, there is nothing I should be afraid to face, with you to back me up."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHAT THE STARS FORETOLD.

MR. PEMBROKE TRACY, the new pupil—being one of those favoured individuals for whom all others are supposed to wait, and arrange, that they may enjoy slumber, and meals, and ease, undisturbed by any troubles of conscience about their duty—was somewhat aggrieved the next morning, on descending at his usual comfortable hour, to find that Lewis and the others had been at work very early, had breakfasted, and been out nearly an hour. He had thought himself particularly industrious and thoughtful in securing the only room the landlady had left, in the same house as his tutor; so that, as he said, he should lose no time in going backwards and forwards; but such a horrible state of things, as this implied, had never entered his

imagination. His landlady, who, though civil, looked as if so many gentlemen to provide for had rather stopped the flow of her ideas, made no objection to serving his breakfast; but in reply to some discontented criticisms on her coffee and rashers, hinted that it would be more convenient if their meals "was all took together."

"Much more convenient to me, I am sure, ma'am," said Pembroke, "but you don't suppose I am going to addle my brain by getting up at cock-crow to be bothered with books as the only chance of getting a decent cup of coffee? You don't know how much depends on my being able to study hard down here; and no one can possibly study who is made uncomfortable over his meals."

"Surely, no, sir," was all the satisfaction he could obtain; and with it he had to be content; and finding his own society not much enlivened by the travelling library of the party, he took the trouble of unpacking his fishing-rod, and sauntered towards the stream that ran through the park. He could not find Lewis, and might probably have passed his first studious morning in sleep, if his curiosity had not been attracted by the approach of some ladies, whom, from his shady position, he could watch unobserved.

"I wonder which of these," thought he, "is the heiress the stars mean me to have. It would be an awful mistake to get the wrong one. I wish I'd asked the fellow if stars could do anything by daylight—one doesn't exactly know what becomes of 'em. There, they are walking this way! I'll throw a fly sweetly, just to catch their attention, and see what will come of that."

What might have come of it had he been attending to only one thing at a time, it is impossible to affirm; but what really happened, just as the ladies had paused to watch his performance, was that his line got entangled in the boughs above his head, and that he was only saved from ignominy by the promptitude of one of the boys, whom a lame foot had detained behind the rest.

"I say, are you trying to catch birds?" asked this youthful deliverer, after he had freed his fellow student's line.

"Thanks, yes—and I've hooked a fine cock robin. There, you may manage the thing for me, if you like; it is rather a bore when one has something better to think of. Do you know those ladies?"

"Of course I do," said the youngster, who was reared under the shadow of Comberhoe. "They are Frankland's friends—and one of them is no end of an heiress. That is Miss Combermere walking nearest the bank, and the other is Miss Granard. Isn't she a beauty?"

"Is she the heiress?" asked Mr. Tracy, with sudden animation.

"No, she is the guardian; that is the heiress, picking flowers as she goes along. They say she has the most wonderful genius for collecting and storing all kinds of things—animal, mineral, and vegetable; and that she can tame any creature, if she only has the managing of it. I say, that's a bite."

"I wonder if she could tame *me*," thought Mr. Tracy, pensively;

"it would save me a world of trouble. I'll hang about with a book in my hand, and get an introduction somehow."

With an air of great good-nature he made his young informant welcome to the use of his rod, and sauntered across the little bridge just in time to meet the ladies. Taking care to make room for them as they passed, he lifted his hat; a politeness returned by both friends, so that he had a clear sight of their faces. Emily had lingered in the attempt to gather a fern which grew just too low for her to reach, and her effort to obtain it afforded the adventurous Tracy the very opportunity he craved. Scrambling down the bank, he brought up a whole root of the desired fern; a gift which Emily received with real satisfaction, and proceeded at once to name and classify. He observed, with a smile, "that she knew a great deal more about ferns than he did—he wished he knew more about everything," an assertion which made her lift a pair of large, thoughtful eyes to his face.

"To know much about everything is to be very learned indeed," she said, with a simplicity that had no idea of being ironical. "But by taking a little trouble one may learn something every day; and the more we do, the more there seems to learn."

"Yes, that's the worst of it," said the student, disconsolately, "and it is one reason for not beginning at all—only one has to some time or other; so I'm come to study under Lewis Frankland."

"You are a pupil of Mr. Frankland's? Oh, then you are sure to make progress, and to get on—his pupils always do."

"You don't say so! I hope it will prove true. I beg your pardon—do you see anything more I can get for you?"

"I was looking at that blue dragon-fly; I am very fond of them," said Emily, quietly.

"Fond of ——? ah, of course—most interesting, I am sure," said Pembroke, thinking to himself, "It won't do to stick at trifles; but what a queer life she must lead, with such a taste in pets?"

His air of intense admiration of the gauzy creature darting to and fro, quite impressed the young lady; and when Kate and Adela looked round they perceived her holding earnest conversation with a stranger. Conversation which, as they discovered on returning to her, was chiefly on her side; the gentleman meekly receiving instruction, which she was freely pouring out.

"A friend of Mr. Frankland's," was introduction enough; and after Pembroke, with a dexterity on which he piqued himself, had also brought in Cecilia Palmer's name, his footing might be considered established. When Lewis joined the party, he found his pupil quite at his ease with the three ladies, and bent on learning natural history in all its branches; how many there might be Tracy did not enquire. Lewis's private verdict that he was a good-humoured, idle fellow, who had not two ideas beyond his own comfort, but meant no harm, was sufficiently lenient to obtain him a general kind of invitation; and

he took leave at last, in very sanguine spirits, a hopeful believer in the prophecy of the stars.

Unconscious that her own destiny was in any way connected with their shining, Emily was that evening looking intently at the brilliant constellations, with whose wonders Archdeacon Burleigh had early made her acquainted, when Adela Granard came behind her, and laid her hand on her shoulder. Sparing of her caresses, as the most loving friends find it wise to be when always together, there was a peculiar charm and meaning in that action, to which Emily was always sensible; and she lifted her eyes to her guardian's face, with a look which required no words to give it expression.

"Yes," said Adela, answering the look, "I am very glad; for she has loved him all along—no one could help seeing that. It is a pleasure to see such happiness in three faces at once; Sir Marcus seems as glad as the other two."

"They will never think of leaving him alone, will they?"

"No fear of that, Emily; but they have not come to details yet. Time enough for cares and difficulties when they must be met."

"Ah!" said the young girl, with a marked emphasis, "but when you do meet them, they carry away all the brightness that went before. When I was looking at those two this evening, I could not help wishing that a wave of my wand could bring back what I saw once—just for a little while: two faces, so beautiful in their happiness——"

"Don't, my child," murmured Adela.

"You cannot deny their beauty—your glass and your heart would cry shame if you did. You were as happy for a few days as people could be; and then down came a cold cloud, and all was changed, and nipped, and frost-bitten. And I know I was partly the cause, though I could not help it; and that, but for me, you might have been happy long ago, and Mr. Archdale need not have gone to India."

"How can you tell, dear, that we should ever have met at all, but for you? I can see no ground for supposing that, if I had been alone, I should have gone down to the north that day in January, to join the party at Comber Court."

"Then you mean what you have so often said, that all has been for the best? I try to think the same, but I cannot always. I know I have divided you, and you must long to have him back."

"And therefore you are trying to make me grumble, and feel envious of Kate and Mr. Frankland. And yet you know what Ernest Archdale tells us—that his health has been so much better, and that his affairs have prospered so well lately, that he hopes to return in another year; full two years sooner than he expected to do. And have we not, meanwhile, you and I, been happy together?"

A loving look was the only reply; and the orphan remained silent for some little time, thinking more deeply than her guardian was perhaps aware.

Yes, they had been happy. The very difficulty of the educational task before her had assisted Adela in performing it rightly. It required time, patience, and care, to settle the child's mind in a healthy practical condition, capable of bearing trials and difficulties without the acute suffering of her persecuted childhood; and during that earlier period, the future was left to her own imagination. She might dream at will of what she would do when she grew up—of the presents she would buy for all her friends, the journeys they would take in all parts of the world, to add to their collections; the cottages she would build for the poor women, the gardens she would plant for the bees—the home that would always be open for all birds and beasts whom the winds of heaven were visiting too roughly. But as she advanced in years and understanding, she began to perceive that her plans were not encouraged as they had been, and the Archdeacon once bluntly told her that it was time to give over all that nonsense. She must learn to be just before she was generous.

“Can I not be both?” Emily asked, in some consternation.

“If you work for it, yes.”

He refused to explain, and she went in some distress to Adela Granard. Adela, who had been dreading this hour, even while preparing for it, listened gravely and kindly, and told her the Archdeacon was right—there was a debt of justice to be defrayed when she was able; and whenever she wished she should see the accounts, and learn something of her liabilities. Accounts being Emily's favourite aversion, she did not embrace this offer with any enthusiasm; and the subject was dropped for the time, to the guardian's relief. But Adela knew her duty too well to defer the necessary pain longer than was right for both; and it was settled that an explanation should be made after they had visited the property belonging to the estate, of which special mention was made in Miles Darlington's letter—the investment of his savings, untainted by the subsequent fraud. Of this letter Emily knew nothing; her friends having always hoped to recover it, with the rest of the lost packet; but nothing had been heard of it. They had accompanied the Combermeres to London, on the understanding that they, in turn, would go with them into Kent.

Visits to London had been rare in Emily's life, and were only made possible when Professor Dangerfield removed his establishment to America. He made a point of regularly writing to his step-daughter, expressing his parental interest in her welfare; and she had a stereotyped form of respectful reply, which appeared to satisfy all his wishes; and while his epistles bore the American post-mark, nobody cared how often he wrote. London, even at the close of the season, had been absorbing enough in its sights and sounds to occupy Emily thoroughly; indeed, the attractions of the British Museum and the Zoological Gardens were so great that Adela was almost scandalised to find them preferred to pictures, music, and churches; but Sir

Marcus only smiled, and told her Art and History would assert themselves in time. So the patient guardian spent hours in the dead and living collections of the natural world, and discovered, to the increase of her own humility, how much there was to learn there, and how very little she knew. During their stay in town she had renewed her own intercourse with old friends and kindred; and Emily made a few steps in the world, under their auspices; but it was on these occasions, as had happened before in the north, that Adela was most aware of a difference between her charge and other girls. Emily disliked society so much that it was only from a sense of duty Miss Granard could bear to press it upon her; especially when she found the child-like glee with which Emily returned to her favourite pursuits afterwards, as if a hard lesson had been mastered, or disagreeable penance gone through.

The perplexing part of it all was that, while child-like in some things, she could at times astonish her companions by a thoughtfulness beyond her years; and more than one indication had been given that much was going on in her ever active brain to which she gave no clue. The Archdeacon's instructions had opened his library to her understanding; and the result of a great deal of mixed reading had been to create a great number of mixed ideas, more than she herself could always disentangle. And strengthened though her frame and system had been by mountain air and good management, there was always the risk that the sufferings of her early days might show results in some unlooked-for weakness in mind or body.

The silence that had fallen upon them at the window was broken by Emily's sudden question, "Did you know the Professor was in London?"

"No, indeed. Who told you he was?" asked Miss Granard, somewhat startled.

"Mr. Tracy said he had cast his horoscope. I don't think he quite knew what it meant."

"Very likely; and I should doubt its meaning anything in his case, but a trick on an ignorant lad. What did he tell you?"

"Only that the stars had promised him something great, which he must not talk about. I think he does talk about it, notwithstanding. Do people still study astrology? I thought that was all past and gone."

Adela, glad to see that the idea of the Professor's return appeared to trouble her ward so little, took an opportunity, when Lewis claimed her good wishes before departing, of communicating what she had heard. He gave a low whistle.

"Honest Pem, with his head in the stars, is a spectacle for gods and men," he observed, "and I suppose this is the last development of spiritualism. I dare say the Professor will make a good thing of it; but I wish he had kept it for the New World. I'll sound the youngster, and find out what it all means."

Very little sounding was required to ascertain what Pembroke had settled was the meaning. There was his fate, and he had nothing to do but to follow it. A nice, good-natured girl, not too handsome, and with plenty of the ready, was what he had always wished for; he had no nonsensical pride about the wife having the money—it didn't matter who had it first, if they shared it afterwards; and that he should make her the happiest creature in the world. Lewis gravely suggested that she might object to him personally; but that, as Pem observed, could not be known till she had been asked: and as he was not going to ask her yet, it mattered to nobody.

"The stars know all about it," he asserted, so coolly that Lewis hardly knew whether to laugh at, or with, him; or whether a good shaking would not perhaps be best of all. He kept his countenance, however, as well as his temper; only remarked that if Tracy's head was taken up with such studies and prospects, he could be in no need of his assistance, and therefore he should decline the undertaking; a hint which brought that young gentleman down from his altitudes to a sufficiently meek state, in which he was made to promise that no annoyance of any kind should be given to the ladies. This promise Lewis knew he could quite be trusted to keep. It seemed as if the stimulus of his secret was just what he wanted to make him work, for he threw his mind into his books, and when allowed to join the society of his new acquaintance, made himself pleasant without being intrusive. "A good-natured boy," was the general verdict; and it answered his purpose better than more decided praise, especially as they did not see the letter he wrote to his confidential friend and kinswoman, Mrs. Palmer.

After telling his "dear cousin Cecy" that he was "in for an awful grind," and that Frankland was not a bad fellow, only he expected you to do everything in a minute, and have your wits at your fingers' ends—he went on to explain that he was not wasting his precious time over stupid books all day long—not he. Some ladies had come down with Sir Marcus Combermere, and they made such a point of his going about with them, that of course he was, as usual, "only too good-natured." Frankland had a team of young cubs to trot about, and the ladies would have nobody to look after them but for their faithful Pem, who had gone in for natural history to an alarming extent, and had been known to fall on his knees for joy at the sight of a black-beetle. One of the ladies was an heiress, and a collector of beetles and spiders, and reptiles of all sorts, and Pem was creeping into her affections by the intense delight which he took in the subject.

"I believe you know her, for she remembers you as the pretty Miss Wilmot, who tried to comfort her once when she was frightened. I should like to catch anybody frightening her now—I'd skewer him like a cock-chaffer. Excuse the overflow of natural history, everything presents itself in an insect form. My heiress is Emily Stormount; and the curious thing is that I should meet her just after having my

fortune told by her step-father. He could not know we should run up against each other in this place, for it was not then settled that I should come at all, and she did not know he was in England. Won't it be jolly if it all turns out like a book, and instead of putting my nose to the grindstone in an office, for a wretched pretence of a salary, I drop into a tidy income, with a nice little wife, devoted to me, and a home where you can come and stay with us. I have just heard that we are to go and look at some houses in the neighbourhood, belonging to my sweet girl. I wonder how a landlord (that shall be) ought to behave on such occasions. Is benevolence and an easy pay-day the thing, or is rent supposed to be vulgar? I have always been on the wrong side of it hitherto; so I can't say. Love to Bob, if he is amiable. Your affectionate cousin,

“PEMBROKE TRACY.”

Major Palmer's present lodgings were in Mount Street, and his wife was sitting alone in her small drawing-room, darkened for coolness, and with an outward appearance of fashion, and even luxury, that veiled, to a casual observer, the want of comfort beneath. The world was out of town, and her husband had followed it, though only, as he told her, for one night, on a matter of business; and she was left without the choice whether to stay or go, only conscious of relief in the absence of her master. The afternoon's post had brought in several letters, and Pem's among them; and as the others had a suspiciously mercantile look about their envelopes, she was glad to read her cousin's first. He was the only one of her new relatives for whom she felt real affection. A smile played on her lips for a moment, but soon died away, leaving her face sadder than before.

“Comforting Emily Stormount when she was frightened? I was frightened enough myself; and no wonder. I felt spiteful enough that evening for anything, and it was a temptation to see if I could play the spirit, when I had such an opportunity. But I did not mean to hurt her, poor child; and I had no idea she would remember that I tried to unpick the mischief I had done. Oh! if one could!—but I never was able to manage it yet. How pleasant it must be there, with those kind-hearted people, for anyone whose life was not wretched—who had still something to hope for—some one to think about! Oh, why is it that, if one has such power to do oneself harm, one is so utterly helpless to make up for it afterwards?”

Hers was, indeed, an instance of shipwreck, through sheer wilfulness on one hand, and weakness on the other. The mixture of wounded pride and gratified vanity that made her accept the attentions of a man for whom she felt no regard, blinded her to the consequences; and so she drifted into marriage. She found, when too late, that she was the prisoner of a heartless, selfish man, already deeply in debt, and not at all scrupulous as to the methods of raising money;

and the years that we have passed over in our narrative had been to her years of heavy trouble—the heavier, that she was obliged to keep up appearances under difficulties and mix in society which had lost all its charm. Her husband required her to be always well dressed, always prepared for outlay, always presenting the world with a smiling front—no matter what disaster of debt might be pressing in the rear. And she had come to think, as she told Pembroke Tracy, that the very height of luxury would be to live in a cottage, and make the week's wages cover the week's expenses.

How many images of the past had risen to haunt her memory, as she sat that day musing over the boy's thoughtless scrawl, we cannot say; when her maid came in, with a mysterious expression of countenance. A visitor had called to see Major Palmer, and would not take a denial, as he had come by appointment.

"A gentleman, Jessy?"

"Well, ma'am, yes—I suppose so. I have seen him before, ma'am, and he was better dressed then. At least, I think he is the same," added Jessy, hesitating.

"Anyone I know?" asked her mistress, mechanically turning to the glass.

"Yes, ma'am—that is, you went to his house one evening, with Mrs. Archdale. Perhaps you remember, ma'am."

"Professor Dangerfield? Tell him the Major will be back to-morrow. Or stay: ask him in here, and bring some tea. I will see him myself."

There was agitation enough in her manner to quicken Jessy's curiosity, which had never been satisfied on the subject of that evening's expedition. She hastened to usher in the visitor: whose exterior, notwithstanding all his skill in costume, was no longer as imposing as in former years. Sunburnt from his recent voyage, he was more gaunt and hollow-eyed than when Cecilia saw him last; and if he had brought home the secret of making gold, it had evidently cost him dear. But there was no faltering of gait, no abatement of dignity, when he made his bow to Mrs. Palmer; and, fixing his eyes on hers, stood as one expecting the honour that was his due, and which he scorned to claim. She hastened to greet him courteously, begged he would be seated, regretted the Major's absence, and asked how he liked America; all in a slightly agitated manner, which was not lost on her visitor. He took the offered seat, but gravely observed that the Major had promised to meet him, his business being urgent. He did not expect such an appointment would be overlooked.

"The Major's friends know his ways," replied Cecilia, with a slight smile, "and are never surprised when he fails them."

"A friend never fails me twice, Mrs. Palmer; and if I leave this house unsatisfied, the consequences must fall upon him—and on you. I shall deeply regret the last; even though it work out the fulfilment

of what I foresaw long since—ever since the day that Cairngorm ran, and Ernest Archdale rode.”

“It is late in the day to prophesy for me now,” she replied, with more sarcasm than he expected, “and the less said on that subject to Major Palmer, the better: unless you wish to quarrel with him.”

“It is on that very subject that I must speak, and plainly, too, though I would have saved you, madam, all the pain I could. I understand that the story has been revived, and considerable sensation excited by some recent revelations. Even your name has not been entirely spared.”

“No one ever spares me now,” she returned with a forced laugh, that ended in a tearless sob. “In any suffering to be borne, I am called to take my full share of it—if not more.”

“You know what has been said, and will be said again, of your share in that business—that you, whom Archdale admired, perhaps loved ——”

“I cannot listen to this, Professor,” she said, rising. “It cannot be necessary, and it sounds like insult.”

“It *is* necessary; and it is to save you that I speak,” firmly rejoined Mr. Dangerfield. “You are accused of having played into your future husband’s hands, by persuading Archdale to ride the horse. For you he did what he would not have done for all the rest of the world, and the bait proved successful: and when Archdale was laid on his sick bed in consequence, you were driving out with his triumphant rival. This is what is being circulated now. It will be the talk of society for months, unless measures are taken in time.”

She had shrunk back into her chair while he was speaking, and covered her face with her hands. Time had not so healed that old wound, that a rude pressure could not waken up the dormant anguish. Even Cosmo Dangerfield felt some compunction when he saw the tears trickling through her fingers.

“Will you not believe, dear madam, that I share your pain, and am only solicitous of permission to relieve it? Reproach yourself no more for what is past: you only followed the course marked out by fate; you were destined to be the cause of strife and rivalry; but brighter things may be in store for you yet.”

“Are you going to tell me, as you did Pembroke Tracy, that the stars have promised me a good fortune?” retorted Cecilia bitterly, as she dashed away her tears. “Unless they can show me some way of realising it, the Major will hardly appreciate the news.”

“Our science holds different methods for different natures,” was the sententious reply. “You and that simple-hearted youth are subject to influences of a totally opposite character. On him the spirits have no effect; on you they have.”

“But suppose I do not believe in them?”

“You turn their influence in a malign direction, that is all. Unbelief does not alter facts, but it can affect circumstances.”

The entrance of Jessy and the tea saved Cecilia from replying. The man's voice thrilled and cowed her, she knew not why ; and she shivered in spite of herself. The duties of the tea-tray absorbed her for some minutes, an interval which our philosopher failed not to turn to account, though when she looked round again, he appeared sunk in a reverie. He drank the tea she offered, more as if condescending to confer than as accepting a civility, and gradually led the conversation to matters which she would have left untouched under less skilful handling. As it was, the subtle power which he could exercise over some temperaments made her plastic in his hands ; and he drew out of her all that he wanted to know, and more than she was aware of telling. In return, he whispered in her ear his plan for defeating the intended attack of their enemies ; and the terms on which his witness and co-operation could alone be secured.

"Tell your husband what I have told you ; and that it is for your sake I offer these easy terms. To anyone else they would be trebled. And now, before I leave you, my dear lady, may I ask if you have seen my friend Mowatt lately—and where he is to be found ?"

She gave him the address. Mr. Mowatt was said to be in a great deal of practice, and making a large fortune. If not at home, as was probable at that hour, he called nearly every day on an invalid friend of hers, who could not exist in safety without his permission. There was her card, if the Professor liked to enquire for him there. As to giving messages to Major Palmer, she could make no promises. He particularly disliked anyone meddling with his affairs.

The Professor bowed, thanked her for the courtesy she had shown in receiving him, and took his departure.

About ten minutes after, Jessy was startled by the impatient ringing of her lady's bell. Cecilia had always been kind to her attendants ; and the woman had remained with her from personal attachment, in spite of much discomfort. She ran to see what such a summons could mean. Mrs. Palmer was searching the whole room in great excitement.

"I have mislaid a letter that came this afternoon. Did you see it when you brought in the tray ?"

Jessy paused to think. Yes, she was sure she saw one lying open at her mistress's elbow. Mrs. Palmer explained that she had found the envelope still there, but the letter was gone. Mistress and maid looked at each other, and the same thought occurred to both. The only person who could have taken it was Cosmo Dangerfield.

(To be concluded.)

THE CURATE OF ST. MATTHEW'S.

"**N**O, Johnny Ludlow, I shall not stay at home, and have the deeds sent up and down by post. I know what lawyers are ; so will you, some time : this letter to be read and answered to-day ; that paper to be digested and despatched back to-morrow—anything to enhance their bill of costs. I intend to be in London, on the spot ; and so will you be, Mr. Johnny."

So said Mr. Brandon to me, as we sat in the bay window at Crabb Cot, at which place we were staying. *I* was willing enough to go to London ; liked the prospect beyond everything ; but he was not well, and I thought of the trouble to him.

"Of course, sir, if you consider it necessary we should be there. But ———"

"Now, Johnny Ludlow, I have told you my decision," he interrupted, cutting me short in all the determination of his squeaky little voice. "You go with me to London, sir, and we start on Monday morning next ; and I daresay we shall be kept there a week. I know what lawyers are."

This happened when I came of age, twenty-one ; but I should not be of age as to my property for four more years : until then, Mr. Brandon remained my arbitrary guardian and trustee, just as strictly as he had been. Arbitrary so far as doing the right thing as trustee went, not suffering me, or anybody else, to squander a shilling. One small bit of property fell to me now ; a farm ; and old Brandon was making as much legal commotion over the transfer of it from his custody to mine, as though it had been veined with gold. For this purpose, to execute the deeds of transfer, he meant to take up his quarters in London, to be on the spot with the lawyers who had it in hand, and to carry me up with him.

And what great events trivial chances bring about ! Chances, as they are called. These "chances" are all in the hands of one Divine Ruler, who is ever shaping them to further His own wise ends. But for my going to London that time and staying there—however, I'll not let the cat out of the bag. -

He stayed with us at Crabb Cot until the Monday, when we started for London ; the Squire and Tod coming to the station to see us off. Mr. Brandon wore a nankeen suit, and had a green veil in readiness. A green veil, if you'll believe me ! The sun was under a cloud just then ; had been for the best part of the morning ; but if it came out fiercely—Tod threw up his arms behind old Brandon's back, and gave me a grin and a whisper.

"I'd not be you for something, Johnny ; he'll be taken for a lunatic."

"And mind you take care of yourself, sir," put in the Squire, to me. "London is a dreadful place; full of temptations; and you are but an inexperienced boy, Johnny. Be cautious and watchful, lad; don't pick up any strange acquaintances in the streets; sharpers are on the watch to get you into conversation, and then swindle you out of all the money in your pockets. Be sure don't forget the little hamper for Miss Deveen; and ——"

The puffing of the engine, as we started, drowned the rest. We reached Paddington smoothly and safely—and old Brandon did not once put on the veil. He took a cab to the Tavistock Hotel, and I another cab to Miss Deveen's.

For she had asked me to stay with her. Hearing of my probable visit to town through a letter of Helen Whitney's, she, ever kind, wrote at once, saying, if I did go, I must make her house my home for the time, and that it would be a most delightful relief to the stagnation she and Miss Cattledon had been lately enjoying. Of course that was just her pleasant way of putting it.

The house looked just as it used to look; the clustering trees of the north-western suburb were as green and grateful to the tired eye as of yore; and Miss Deveen, in grey satin, received me with the same glad smile, and the warm kiss of welcome. I knew I was a favourite of hers; she once said there were few people in the world she liked as well as she liked me—which made me feel proud and grateful. "I should leave you a fortune, Johnny," she said to me that same day, "but that I know you have plenty of your own." And I begged her not to do anything of the kind; not to think of it: she must know a great many people to whom her money would be a God-send. She laughed at my earnestness, and told me I should be unselfish to the end.

We spent a quiet evening. The grey-haired curate, Mr. Lake, who had come in the first evening I ever spent at Miss Deveen's, years ago, came in again by invitation. "He is so modest," she had said to me, in those long-past years, "he never comes without being invited:" and he was modest still. His hair had been chestnut-coloured once; it was half grey and half chestnut now; and his face and voice were gentle, and his manners kindly. Cattledon was displaying her most gracious behaviour, and thinnest waist; one of the roses I had brought up with the strawberries was sticking out of the body of her green silk gown. For at least half a dozen years she had been setting her cap at the curate—and I think she must have been endowed with supreme patience.

"If you do not particularly want me this morning, Miss Deveen, I think I will go over to service."

It was the next morning, and after breakfast. Cattledon had been down-stairs, giving the orders for dinner—and said this on her return. Every morning she went through the ceremony of asking whether she was wanted, before attiring herself for church.

"Not I," cried Miss Deveen, with a half smile. "Go, and welcome, Jemima!"

I stood at the window listening to the ting-tang: the bell of St. Matthew's church could be called nothing else: and watched her pick her way across the road, just deluged by the water-cart. She wore a striped fawn-coloured gown, cut straight up and down, which made her look all the thinner, and a straw bonnet and white veil. The church was on the other side of the wide road, lower down, but within view. Some stragglers went into it with Cattledon; not many.

"Does it pay to hold the daily morning service?"

"Pay?" repeated Miss Deveen, looking at me with an arch smile. And I felt ashamed of my inadvertent, hasty word.

"I mean, is the congregation sufficient to repay the trouble?"

"The congregation, Johnny, usually consists of some twenty people, a few more, or a few less, as may chance; and they are all young ladies," she added, the smile deepening to a laugh. "At least, unmarried ones; some are as old as Miss Cattledon. Two of them are widows of thirty-five: they are especially constant in attendance."

"They go after the curate," I said, laughing with Miss Deveen. "One year when Mr. Holland was ill, down with us, he had to take on a curate, and the young ladies ran after him."

"Yes, Johnny, the young ladies go after the curates; we have two of them. Mr. Lake is the permanent curate; he has been here, oh, twelve or thirteen years. He does the chief work, in the church and out of it; we have a great many poor, as I think you know. The other curate is changed at least every year, and is generally a young deacon, fresh from college. Our rector is fond of giving young men their title to orders. The young fellow we have now is a nobleman's grandson, with more money in his pocket to waste on light gloves and hair-wash than poor Mr. Lake dare spend on all his living."

"Mr. Lake seems to be a very good man."

"A better man never lived," returned Miss Deveen warmly, as she got up from the note she was writing, and came to my side. "Self-denying, anxious, pains-taking; a true follower of his Master, a Christian to the very depths of his heart. He is one of those unobtrusive men whose merits are kept hidden from the world in general, who are content to work on patiently and silently in their path of duty, looking for no promotion, no reward here, because it seems to lie so very far away from their track."

"Is Mr. Lake poor?"

"Mr. Lake has just one hundred pounds a year, Johnny. It was what Mr. Selwyn offered him when he first came, and it has never been increased. William Lake told me one day," added Miss Deveen, "that he thought the hundred a year riches then. He was not a very young man; turned thirty; but his stipend in the country had been only fifty pounds a year. To have it doubled all at once, no doubt did seem like riches."

"Why does not the rector raise it?"

"The rector says he can't afford to do it. I believe Mr. Lake once plucked up courage to ask him for a small increase: but it was of no use. The living is worth six hundred a-year, out of which the senior curate's stipend has to be paid; and Mr. Selwyn's family is expensive. His two sons are just leaving college. So, poor Mr. Lake has just plodded on with his hundred a-year, and made it do. The rector wishes he could raise it: he knows his worth. During this prolonged illness of Mr. Selwyn's he has been most indefatigable."

"Is Mr. Selwyn ill?"

"Not very ill, but ailing. He has been so for two years. He generally preaches on a Sunday morning, but that is about all the duty he has been able to take. Mr. Lake is virtually the incumbent; he does everything, in the church and out of it."

"Without the pay," I remarked.

"Without the pay, Johnny. His hundred a-year, however, seems to suffice him. He never grumbles at it, never complains, is always contented and cheerful: and no doubt will be contented with it to the end."

"But—if he has no more than that, and no expectation of more, how is it that the ladies run after him? They *can't* expect him to marry upon a hundred a-year."

"My dear Johnny, let a clergyman possess nothing but the white surplice on his back, the ladies would trot at his heels all the same. It comes naturally to them. They trust to future luck, you see; promotion is always possible, and they reckon upon it. I'm sure the way Mr. Lake gets run after is as good as a play. This young lady sends him a pair of slippers, her own work; that one embroiders a cushion for him: Cattledon painted a velvet fire-screen for him last year—'Oriental tinting.' You never saw a screen so gorgeous."

"Do you think he has—has—any idea of Miss Cattledon?"

"Just as much as he has of me," cried Miss Deveen. "He is kind and polite to her; as he is, naturally, to every one; but you may rely upon it he never gave her a word or a look that could be construed into anything warmer."

"How silly she must be!"

"Not more silly than the rest are. It is a mania, Johnny, and they all go in for it. Jemima Cattledon—stupid old thing!—cherishes hopes of Mr. Lake: a dozen others cherish the same. Most of them are worse than she is, for they course about the parish after him all day long. Cattledon never does that: with all her zeal, she does not forget that she is a gentlewoman; she meets him here, at my house, and she goes to church to see and hear him, but she does not race after him."

"Do you think he is aware of all this pursuit?"

"Well, he must be, in a degree; William Lake is not a simpleton. But the very hopelessness of his being able to marry must in his mind

act as a counterbalance, and cause him to look upon it as a harmless pastime. How could he think any one of them in earnest, remembering his poor hundred pounds a-year ?”

Thus talking, the time slipped on, until we saw the congregation coming out of church. The service had taken just three-quarters of an hour.

“Young Chisholm has been reading the prayers to-day ; I am sure of that,” remarked Miss Deveen. “He gabbles them over as fast as a parrot.”

The ladies congregated within the porch, and without : ostensibly to exchange compliments with one another ; in reality to wait for the curates. The two appeared together : Mr. Lake quiet and thoughtful ; Mr. Chisholm, a very tall, slim, empty-headed young fellow, smiling here, and shaking hands there, and ready to chatter with the lot.

For full five minutes they remained stationary. Some important subject of conversation had evidently been started, for they stood around Mr. Lake, listening to something he was saying. The pew-opener, a woman in a muslin cap, and the bell-ringer, an old man in a battered hat, halted on the outskirts of the throng.

“One or other of those damsels is sure to invent some grave question to discuss with him,” laughed Miss Deveen. “Perhaps Betty Smith has been breaking out again. She gives more trouble, with her alternate repentings and her lapsings back to the tap-room, than all the rest of the old women put together.”

Presently the group dispersed ; some going one way, some another. Young Chisholm walked off at a smart pace, as if he meant to make a round of morning calls ; the elder curate and Miss Cattledon crossed the road together.

“His way home lies past our house,” remarked Miss Deveen, “so that he often does cross the road with her. He lives at Mrs. Topcroft’s.”

“Mrs. Topcroft’s ! What a curious name.”

“So it is, Johnny. But she is a curiously good woman—in my opinion ; worth her weight in gold. Those young ladies yonder turn up their noses at her, calling her a ‘lodging-letter.’ They are jealous ; that’s the truth ; jealous of her daughter, Emma Topcroft. Cattledon, I know, thinks the young girl the one chief rival to be feared.”

Mr. Lake passed the garden with a bow, raising his hat to Miss Deveen ; and Cattledon came in.

I went off, as quick as an omnibus could take me, to the Tavistock, being rather beyond time, and preparing for a blowing up from Mr. Brandon in consequence.

“Are you Mr. Ludlow, sir ?” asked the waiter.

“Yes.”

“Then Mr. Brandon left word that he was going down to Lincoln’s Inn, sir ; and if he is not back here at one o’clock precisely, I was to say that you needn’t come down again till to-morrow morning at ten.”

I got into the Strand, and amused myself with looking at the shops, getting back to the hotel a few minutes after one. No ; Mr. Brandon had not come in. All I could do was to leave Miss Deveen's note of invitation to dine with her—that day, or any other day that might be more convenient, or every day—and tell the man to be sure to give it him.

Then I went into the National Gallery, after getting some Bath buns at a pastrycook's. It was between five and six when I returned to Miss Deveen's. Her carriage had just driven up ; she and Cattledon were alighting from it.

"I have a little commission to do yet at one of the shops in the neighbourhood, and I may as well go about it now," remarked Miss Deveen. "Will you go with me, Johnny?"

Of course I said I would go ; and Miss Cattledon was sent indoors to fetch a small paper parcel that lay on the table in the blue room.

"It contains the patterns of some sewing silks that I want to get," she added to me, as we stood waiting on the door-steps. "If ——"

At that moment, out burst the ting-tang. Miss Deveen suddenly broke off what she was saying, and turned to look at the church.

"Do they have service at this hour?" I asked.

"Hush, Johnny ! That bell is not going for service. Some one must be dead."

In truth, I heard that, even as she spoke. Three times three it struck out, followed by the sharp, quick strokes.

"That's the passing-bell !" exclaimed Cattledon, coming quickly from the hall with the little packet in her hand. "Who *can* be dead ? It hardly rings out once in a year."

For, it appeared, the bell at St. Matthew's did not in general toll for the dead : was not expected to do so. Our bell at Church Dykely rang out for anybody who could pay for it.

Waiting there on the steps, we saw Mr. Lake coming from the direction of the church. Miss Deveen walked down the broad path of her small front garden, and stood at the gate to wait for him.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Oh it is a grievous thing !" he cried, in answer, his gentle face pale, his blue eyes suppressing their tears. "It is no other than my dear rector ; my many years' friend !"

"The rector !" gasped Miss Deveen.

"Indeed it is. The complaint he suffered from has increased its symptoms lately, but no one thought of attaching to them the slightest danger. At two o'clock to-day he sent for me, saying he felt very ill. I found him so when I got there ; ill, and troubled. He had taken a turn for the worse ; and death—death," added Mr. Lake, pausing to command his voice, "was coming on rapidly."

Miss Deveen had turned as white as her point-lace collar. "He was troubled, you say?" she asked.

"In such a case as this—meeting death face to face unexpect-

edly—it is hardly possible not to be troubled, however truly we may have lived in preparation for it,” answered the sad, soft voice of the curate. “Mr. Selwyn’s chief perplexity lay in the fact that he had not settled his worldly affairs.”

“Do you mean, not made his will?”

“Just so,” nodded Mr. Lake; “he had meant to do so, he said to me, but had put it off from time to time. We got a lawyer in, and it was soon done; and—and—I stayed on with him afterwards to the end.”

“Oh dear, it is a piteous tale,” sighed Miss Deveen. “And his wife and daughters are away!”

“They went to Oxford last Saturday for a week; and the two sons are there, as you know. No one thought seriously of his illness. Even this morning, when I called upon him after breakfast, though he said he was not feeling well, and did not look well, such a thing as danger never occurred to me. And now he is dead!”

II.

NEVER did a parson’s death cause such a stir in a parish as poor Mr. Selwyn’s did in this. A lively commotion set in. People flew about to one another’s houses like chips in a gale of wind. Not only was the sorrow to himself to be discussed, but the uncertainty as to what would happen now. Some six months previously a church not far off, St. Peter’s, which had rejoiced in three energetic curates, and as many daily services, suddenly changed its incumbent; the new one proved to be an elderly man with wife and children, who did all the duty himself, and cut off the curates and the week-day prayers. What if the like calamity should happen to St. Matthew’s!

I was away most of the following day with Mr. Brandon, so was not in the thick of it, but the loss was made up for in the evening.

“Of course it is impossible to say who will get the living,” cried Mrs. Jonas, one of the two widows already mentioned, who had been dining with Miss Deveen. “I know who ought to—and that is our dear Mr. Lake.”

“‘Oughts’ don’t go for much in this world,” growled Dr. Galliard, a sterling man, in spite of his gruffness. He had recently brought Cattledon out of a bilious attack, and ran in this evening to see whether the cure lasted. “They go for nothing in the matter of Church patronage,” continued he. “If Lake had his deserts, he’d be made incumbent of this living to-morrow: but he is as likely to get it as I am to get the Lord Chancellor’s seals.”

“Who would have done as Mr. Lake has done—given himself up solely and wholly to the duties of the church and the poor, for more years than I can count?” contended Mrs. Jonas, who was rich and positive, and wore this evening a black gauze dress, set off with purple grapes, and a spray of purple grapes in her black hair. “I

say the living is due to him, and the Lord Chancellor ought to present him with it."

Dr. Galliard gave a short laugh. He was a widower, and immensely popular, nearly as much so as Mr. Lake. "Did you ever know a curate succeed to a living under the circumstances?" he demanded. "The Lord Chancellor has enough friends of his own, waiting to snap up anything that falls; be sure of that, Mrs. Jonas."

"Some dean will get it, I shouldn't wonder," cried Cattledon. For at this time we were in the prime old days when a church dignitary might hold half a dozen snug things, if he could drop into them.

"Just so; a dean or some other luminary," nodded the doctor. "It is the province of great divines to shine like lights in the world, and of curates to toil on in obscurity. Well—God sees all things: and what is wrong in this world may be set right in the next."

"You speak of the Lord Chancellor," quietly put in Miss Deveen: "the living is not in his gift."

"Never said it was—was speaking generally," returned the doctor. "The patron of the living is some other great man, nobleman, or what not, living down in the country."

"In Staffordshire, I think," said Miss Deveen, with hesitation, not being sure of her memory. "He is a baronet, I believe; but I forget his name."

"All the same, ma'am: there's no more chance for poor Lake with him than with the Lord Chancellor," returned Dr. Galliard. "Private patrons are worse beset, when a piece of preferment falls in, than even public ones."

"Suppose the parish were to get up a petition, setting forth Mr. Lake's merits and claims, and present it to the patron?" suggested Mrs. Jonas. "Not, I daresay, that it would be of much use."

"Not the slightest use; you may rely upon that," spoke the doctor, in his decisive way. "Lake's best chance is to get taken on by the new man, and stand out for a higher salary."

Certainly it seemed to be his best and only chance of getting any good out of the matter. But it was just as likely he would be turned adrift.

The next day we met Mrs. Jonas in the King's Road. She rather a down look as she accosted Miss Deveen.

"Nobody seems willing to bestir themselves about a petition; they say it is so very hopeless. And there's a rumour abroad that the living is already given away."

"To whom is it given?" asked Miss Deveen.

"Well, not to a Very Reverend Dean, as Miss Cattledon suggested last night, but to somebody as bad—or good: one of the Canons of St. Paul's. I daresay it's true. How hard it is on Mr. Lake! How hard it must seem to him!"

"He may stay here as curate, then."

"Never you expect that," contended Mrs. Jonas, her face reddening with her zeal. "These cathedral luminaries have invariably lots of their own circle to provide for."

"Do you not think it will seem hard on Mr. Lake?" I said to Miss Deveen, as we left the little widow, and walked on.

"I do, Johnny Ludlow. I do think he ought to have it; that in right and justice no one has so great a claim to it as he," she impressively answered. "But, as Dr. Galliard says, 'oughts' go for nothing in Church patronage. William Lake is a good, earnest, intellectual man; he has grown grey in the service of the parish, and yet, now that the living is vacant, he has no more chance of it than that silly young Chisholm has—not half as much, I daresay, if the young fellow were but in priest's orders. It is but a common case: scores of curates who have to work on, neglected, to their lives' end could testify to it. Here we are, Johnny. This is Mrs. Topcroft's."

Knocking at the house-door—a small house standing ever so far back from the road—we were shown by a young servant into a pleasant parlour. Emma Topcroft, a merry, bright, laughing girl, of eighteen or nineteen, sat there at work with silks and black velvet. If I had the choice given me between her and Miss Cattledon, thought I, as Mr. Lake seems to have, I know which of the two I should choose.

"Mamma is making a rice pudding in the kitchen," she said, spreading her work out on the table for Miss Deveen to see.

"You are doing it very nicely, Emma. And I have brought you the fresh silks. I could not get them before: they had to send the patterns into town. Is the other screen begun?"

"Oh, yes; and half done," answered Emma, briskly, as she opened the drawer of a work-table, and began unfolding another square of velvet from its tissue paper. "I do the sober colours in both screens first, and leave the bright ones till last. Here's the mother."

Mrs. Topcroft came in, turning down her sleeves at the wrist; a little woman, quite elderly. I liked her the moment I saw her. She was homely and motherly, with the voice and manners of a lady.

"I came to bring Emma the silks, and to see how the work was getting on," said Miss Deveen as she shook hands. "And, what a grievous thing this is about Mr. Selwyn!"

Mrs. Topcroft lifted her hands pityingly. "It has made Mr. Lake quite ill," she answered; "I can see it. And"—dropping her voice—"they say there will be little, or nothing, for Mrs. Selwyn and the children."

"Yes there will; though perhaps not much," corrected Miss Deveen. "Mrs. Selwyn has two hundred a-year of her own. I happen to know it."

"I am very thankful to hear that: we were fearing the worst. I

wonder," added Mrs. Topcroft, "if this will take Mr. Lake from us?"

"Probably. We cannot tell yet. People are saying he ought to have the living if it went by merit: but there's not any hope of that."

"Not any," acquiesced Mrs. Topcroft, shaking her head. "It does seem unjust: that a clergyman should wear out all his best days toiling for a church, and be passed over at last as not worth a consideration."

"It is the way of the world."

"Nobody knows his worth," went on Mrs. Topcroft. "So patient, so good, so self-denying; and so anxious for the poor and sick, and for all the ill-doers who seem to be going wrong. I don't believe there are many men in this world so good as he. All he can scrape and save out of his narrow income he gives away, denying himself necessities to be able to do it: Mr. Selwyn, you know, has given nothing. It has been said he grudged even the communion money."

That was Mrs. Topcroft's report of Mr. Lake; and she ought to know. He had boarded with her long enough. He had the bedroom over the best parlour; and the little den of a back parlour was given over to his own use, in which he saw his parishioners and wrote his sermons.

"They come from the same village in the West of England," said Miss Deveen to me as we walked homewards. "Mr. Lake's father was curate of the place, and Mrs. Topcroft's people are the doctors: her brothers are in practice there now. When she was left a widow upon a very slender income, and settled down in this little house, Mr. Lake came to board with her. He pays a guinea a week only; but Mrs. Topcroft has told me that it pays her amply and she could not have got along without it. The housekeeping is, of necessity, economical: and that suits the pocket on both sides."

"I like Mrs. Topcroft. And she seems quite a lady, though she is poor."

"She is quite a lady, Johnny. Her husband was a civil engineer, very clever: but for his early death he might have become as renowned as his master, Sir John Rennie. The son; he is several years older than Emma; is in the same profession, steady and diligent, and he gains a fair salary now, which of course helps his mother. He is at home night and morning."

"Do you suppose that Mr. Lake thinks of Emma?"

Miss Deveen laughed—as if the matter were a standing joke in her mind. "I do not suppose it, Johnny. I never saw the smallest cause to lead me to suppose it: she is too much of a child. Such a thing never would have been thought of but for the jealous suspicions of the parish—I mean of course our young ladies in it. Because Emma Topcroft is a nice-looking and attractive girl, and because Mr. Lake lives in her companionship, these young women must needs get up the notion. And they despise the Topcrofts accordingly, and turn the cold shoulder on them."

It had struck me that Emma Topcroft must be doing those screens for Miss Deveen. I asked her.

"She is doing them for me in one sense, Johnny," was the answer. "Being an individual of note, you see"—and Miss Deveen laughed again—"that is, my income being known to be a good one, and being magnified by the public into something fabulous, I have to pay the penalty of greatness. Hardly a week passes but I am solicited to become the patroness of some bazaar, not to speak of other charities, or at least to contribute articles for sale. So I buy materials and get Emma Topcroft to convert them into nicknacks. Working flowers upon velvet for banner-screens, as she is doing now; or painting flowers upon cardboard for baskets or boxes, which she does nicely, and such like various things. Two ends are thus served: Emma makes a pretty little income, nearly enough for her clothes, and the bazaars get the work when it is finished, and sell it for their own benefit."

"It is very good of you, Miss Deveen."

"Good! Nay, don't say that, Johnny," she continued, in a reproving tone. "Those whom Heaven has blessed with ample means must remember that they will have to render an account of their stewardship. Trifles, such as these, are but odds and ends, not to be thought of, beside what I ought to do—and try to do."

That same evening Mr. Lake came in, unexpectedly. He called to say that the funeral was fixed for Saturday, and that a portion of the burial service would be read in the church here, before starting for the cemetery: Mrs. Selwyn wished it so.

"I hear that the parish began to indulge a hope that you would be allowed to succeed Mr. Selwyn," Miss Deveen observed to him as he was leaving; "but ——"

"I!" he exclaimed, interrupting her in genuine surprise, a transient flush rising to his face. "What, succeed to the living! How could anyone think of such a thing for a moment? Why, Miss Deveen, I do not possess any interest: not the slightest in the world. I do not even know Sir Robert Tenby. It is not likely he has ever heard my name."

"Sir Robert Tenby!" I cried, pricking up my ears. "Is Sir Robert Tenby the patron?"

"Yes. His country seat is in Worcestershire?"

"Do you know him, Johnny?" asked Miss Deveen.

"A little; not much. Bellwood is near Crabb Cot. I used often to see his wife when she was Anne Lewis: we were great friends. She was a very nice girl."

"A *girl*, Johnny! Is she younger than he is?"

"Young enough to be his daughter."

"But I was about to say," added Miss Deveen to the curate, "that I fear there can be no chance for you, if this report, that the living is already given away, be correct. I wish it had been otherwise."

"There could be no chance for me in any case, dear Miss Deveen; there's no chance for any one so unknown and obscure as I am," he returned, suppressing a sigh as he shook her hand. "Thank you all the same for your kind wishes."

How long I lay awake that night I don't care to recall. An extraordinary idea had taken possession of me. If somebody would but tell Sir Robert Tenby of the merits of this good man, he might be so impressed as to give him the living. We were not sure about the Canon of St. Paul's: he might be a myth, as far as our church went.

Yes, these ideas were all very well; but who would presume to do it? The mice, you know, wanted to bell the cat, but none of them could be got to undertake the task.

Down I went in the morning to Mr. Brandon as soon as breakfast was over. I found him in his sitting-room at *his* breakfast: dry toast, and tea without milk; a yellow silk handkerchief thrown corner-wise over his head, and his face looking green. He had a bilious attack coming on, he said, and thought he had taken a slight cold.

Now I don't want to disparage Mr. Brandon's merits. In some things he was as good as gold. But when he fell into these fanciful attacks he was not practically worth a rush. It was hardly a propitious moment for the scheme I had in my head; but, unfortunately, there was no time to lose: I must speak then, or not at all. Down I sat, and told my tale. Old Brandon, sipping his tea by spoonfuls, listened, and stared at me with his little eyes.

"And you have been getting up in your brain the Utopian scheme that Sir Robert Tenby would put this curate into the living! and want me to propose it to him! Is *that* what you mean, young man?"

"Yes, sir. Sir Robert would listen to you. You are friendly with him, and he is in town. Won't you, please, do it?"

"Not if I know it, Johnny Ludlow. Solicit Robert Tenby to give the living to a man I never heard of: a man I know nothing about! What notions you pick up!"

"Mr. Lake is so good and so pains-taking," I urged. "He has been working all these years ——"

"You have said all that before," interrupted old Brandon, shifting the silk handkerchief on his head more to one side. "I can't answer for it, you know. And, if I could, I should not consider myself justified in troubling Sir Robert."

"What I thought was this, sir: that, if he got to know all Mr. Lake is, he might be *glad* to give him the living: glad of an opportunity to do a good and kind act. I did not think of your asking him to give the living; only to tell him of Mr. Lake, and what he has done, and been. He lives only in Upper Brook Street. It would not be far for you to go, sir."

"I should not go if he lived here at the next door, Johnny Ludlow: should not be justified in going on such an errand. Go yourself."

"I don't like to, sir."

"He'd not eat you; he'd only laugh at you. Robert Tenby would excuse in a silly lad what he might deem impertinence from me. There, Johnny; let it end."

And there it had to end. When old Brandon took up an idea he was hard as adamant.

I stood at the hotel door, wishing I could screw up courage to call at Sir Robert's, but shrinking from it terribly. Then I thought of poor Mr. Lake, and that there was nobody else to tell about him; and at last I started, for Upper Brook Street.

"Is Lady Tenby at home?" I asked, when I got to the door.

"Yes, sir." And the man showed me into a room where Lady Tenby sat, teaching her little boy to walk.

She was just the same kind and simple-mannered woman that she had been as Anne Lewis. Putting both her hands into mine, she said how glad she was to see me in London, and held out the child to be kissed. I explained my errand, and my unwillingness to come; saying I could venture to tell her all about it better than I could tell Sir Robert.

She laughed merrily. "He is not any more formidable than I am, Johnny; he is not the least bit so in the world. You shall see whether he is"—opening the door of the next room. "Robert," she called out in glee, "Johnny Ludlow is here, and is saying you are an ogre. He wants to tell you something, and can't pluck up courage to do it."

Sir Robert Tenby came in, the *Times* in his hand, and a smile his face: the same kind, rugged, homely face that I knew well. He shook hands with me, asking if I wanted his interest to be made prime minister.

And somehow, what with their kindness and their thorough, cordial homeliness, I lost my fears. In two minutes I had plunged into the tale, Sir Robert sitting near me with his elbow on the table, and Anne beside him, her quiet baby on her knee.

"I thought it so great a pity, sir, that you should not hear about Mr. Lake: how hard he has worked for years, and what a good and self-denying man he is," I concluded at last, after telling what Miss Deveen thought of him, and what Mrs. Topcroft said. "Not, of course, that I could presume to suggest such a thing, sir, as that you should bestow upon him the living—only to let you know there was a man so deserving, if—if it was not given already. It is said in the parish that the living is given."

"Is this Mr. Lake a good preacher?" asked Sir Robert, when I paused.

"They say he is one of the best and most earnest of preachers, sir. I have not heard him; Mr. Selwyn generally preached."

"Does he know of your application to me?"

"Why, no, Sir Robert, of course not! I could not have had the

face to tell anybody I as much as wished to make it. Except Mr. Brandon. I spoke to him because I wanted him to come instead of me."

Sir Robert smiled. "And he would not come, I suppose?"

"Oh dear, no: he asked me whether I thought we lived in Utopia. He said I might come if I chose—that what would be only laughed at in a silly boy like me, might be deemed impertinence in him."

The interview came to an end. Anne said she hoped I should dine with them while I was in town—and Mr. Brandon also, Sir Robert added; and with that I came out. Came out just as wise as I had gone in; for never a word of hope did Sir Robert give. For all he intimated to the contrary, the living might be already in the hands of the Canon of St. Paul's.

Two events happened the next day, Saturday. The funeral of the rector, and the departure of Miss Cattledon for Chelmsford, in Essex. An aunt of hers who lived there was taken dangerously ill, and sent for her by telegram. Mr. Brandon came up to dine with us in the evening——But that's neither here nor there.

III.

I SAT in Miss Deveen's pew at church with herself on the Sunday morning; she wore black silk out of respect to the late rector. Mr. Lake and the young deacon, who had a luxuriant crop of yellow hair, had put on black gloves. The church was full; all the world and his wife seemed to have come to it; and the parsons' surplices stood on end with starch.

Mr. Lake was in the reading-desk; it caused, I think, some surprise——could that yellow-haired nonentity of a young dandy be going to preach? He stood at the communion-table, looking interesting, and evidently suffering from a frightful cold: which cold, as we found later, was the reason that Mr. Lake took nearly all the service himself.

What a contrast they were! The simpering, empty-faced young deacon, who was tall and slender as a lamp-post, and had really not much more brains than one; and the thoughtful, earnest, middle-aged priest, with the sad look on his gentle face. Nothing could be more impressive than his reading of the prayers; they were prayed, not read: and his voice was one of those persuasive, musical voices you don't often hear. That other young man's was gruff as a raven's to-day, coming up from his chest in gasps, like puffs from a small steam-engine. If Sir Robert Tenby could but hear this reading! I sighed, as Mr. Lake went through the Litany.

Hardly had the thought crossed my mind, when some commotion in the church caused most of us to turn round: a lady was fainting. But for that, I might never have seen what I did see. In the next pew, right behind ours, sat Sir Robert and Lady Tenby. So surprised

was I that I could not for the moment believe my eyes, and simply stared at them. Anne caught the look, and smiled at me.

Was it a good omen? I took it to be one. If Sir Robert had no thought of Mr. Lake, or if the living was already given to that canon, why should he have come all this way to hear him? I recalled the Sunday, years ago now, when Sir Robert had sat in his own pew at Timberdale, listening attentively to Herbert Tanerton's reading and preaching, deliberating within his mind—I know I thought so then—whether he should bestow upon him the living of Timberdale, or not; whether Herbert was worthy of it. Sir Robert did give it to him: and I somehow took it for an earnest that he might give this one to Mr. Lake.

Meanwhile Mr. Lake ascended the pulpit stairs in his black gown, and began his sermon: supremely unconscious that the patron of the church was just in front of him, looking and listening. Nobody present knew Sir Robert and Lady Tenby.

You should have heard that sermon: all its earnest eloquence, its sound piety, its practical application, and its quiet, impressive delivery. It was not exactly a funeral sermon; but when he spoke of the late rector, who had been so unexpectedly taken away, and whose place in this world could know him no more, hardly a dry eye was in the church: and if he himself had not once or twice paused to call up his equanimity, his own eyes would not have been dry, either. I was glad Sir Robert heard it. It was a sermon to be remembered for all time.

Miss Deveen waited in her pew until the people had mostly gone; she did not like being in a crowd. The Tenbys waited also. In the porch Anne put her hand upon my arm, speaking in a whisper.

"That is Miss Deveen, I suppose. Johnny? What a nice face she has!—What a fine, handsome woman she is! How good she looks!"

"She is good; very. I wish I might introduce her to you."

"That's just what I was going to ask you to do, Johnny. My husband would like to speak with her."

I did it outside in the churchyard. After speaking together for a minute or two, Miss Deveen invited them to step into her house, pointing to it that they might see it was close by. Sir Robert walked on by her side, I behind with Anne. An open carriage was pacing in the road, the servants wearing the Tenby livery: people turned to look at it, wondering whose grand carriage it was. As we went slowly onwards Mr. Lake overtook us. He did not stop, only lifted his hat to Miss Deveen in passing: but she arrested him to ask after Mrs. Selwyn.

"Oh, she is very ill, very sad," he answered, in a tone as if the sorrow were his own. "And at present I fear there's nothing for her but to bear; to bear as she best may: not yet can she open her heart to consolation."

Miss Deveen said no more, and he walked on. It struck me she had only stopped him that Sir Robert might see him face to face. Being a shrewd woman, it could not be but that she argued good from this unexpected visit. And she knew I had been to them.

They would not stay to take lunch ; which was on the table when we went in. Anne said she must get home to her baby : not the young shaver I saw ; a little girl a month or two old. Sir Robert spared a few minutes to shut himself up in the drawing-room with Miss Deveen ; and then the carriage whirled them off.

"I hope he was asking you about Mr. Lake ?" I said impulsively.

"That is just what he was asking, Johnny," replied Miss Deveen.

"He came here this morning, intending to question me. He is very favourably impressed with William Lake ; I can see that : and he said he had never heard a better sermon, rarely one as good."

"I daresay that canon of St. Paul's is all an invention ! Perhaps Mrs. Jonas went to sleep and dreamt it."

"It is certainly not fact," laughed Miss Deveen. "Sir Robert tells me he does not as much as know any one of the canons by sight."

"He did not tell you he should give it to Mr. Lake ?"

"No, Johnny : neither did he give me any grounds for supposing that he would. He is a very cautious man ; I can see that ; conscientiously wishing to do right, and act for the best. We must say nothing of this abroad, remember."

The Reverend William Lake sat down to his breakfast on Monday morning, as the clock was striking half-past nine. He had been called out to baptise a sick baby and pray by its dying mother. Pouring himself out a cup of tea, buttering his first slice of dry toast, and cracking his egg, for that's what his breakfast consisted of, he took up a letter lying on the table, which had come by the morning post. Opening it presently, he found it to contain a request from Sir Robert Tenby that he would call upon him that morning at eleven o'clock, in Upper Brook Street.

"Sir Robert Tenby cannot know of our daily service," thought the clergyman, after reading the note twice over, and wondering what he was wanted for ; he having no knowledge of the tide of affairs : no more notion that Sir Robert had been at the church the previous day than that the man in the moon was there. "I must ask Chisholm to take the service this morning."

Accordingly, his breakfast over, and a sprucer coat put on, he went to the deacon's lodgings—handsome rooms in a good house. That young divine was just beginning breakfast, the table being laid with toasted ham and poached eggs, and potted meats, and hot, buttered muffins, and all kinds of nice things, presenting a contrast to the frugal one Mr. Lake had just got up from.

"Took an extra snooze in bed to nurse myself," cried the young

man, in semi-apology for the lateness of the meal, as he poured out a frothing cup of chocolate. "My cold?—oh, it's better."

"I am glad of that," said Mr. Lake. "I want you to take the service this morning."

"What, do it all!"

"If you will be so good. I have got a note here from Sir Robert Tenby, asking me to call upon him at eleven o'clock. I can't think what he wants."

"Sir Robert Tenby? That's the patron! Oh, I daresay it's only to talk about the Selwyns; or to tell you to take the duty until somebody's appointed to the living."

"Ay," replied Mr. Lake. And he had no other thought, no idea of self-benefit, when he started off to walk to Upper Brook Street.

An hour later, seated in Sir Robert's library, enlightenment came to him. After talking with him for some time, questioning him of his church views and principles, hearing somewhat of his past career and of what he had formerly done at Cambridge, to all of which he gave answers that were especially pleasing to the patron's ear, Sir Robert imparted to him the astounding fact that he—*he!*—was to be the new rector.

William Lake sat, the picture of astonishment, wondering whether his ears were playing him false.

"*I!*" he exclaimed, scarcely above his breath. "I never thought of myself. I can hardly believe—believe—pardon me, Sir Robert—is there no mistake?"

"No mistake so far as I am concerned," replied Sir Robert, suppressing a smile. "I have heard of your many years' services at St. Matthew's, and of your worth. I do not think I could bestow it upon one who deserves it better than you—if as well. The living is yours, if you will accept it."

"You are very kind, sir," gasped the curate, not in the least recovering his senses. "May I presume to ask who it is that has been so kind as to speak of me?"

"The person from whom I first heard of you was young Johnny Ludlow," smiled Sir Robert. "Mr. Johnny presented himself to me here last Friday, in a state of inward commotion, not having been able to get anybody else to come, evidently thinking, though not saying, that I should commit an act of singular injustice if the living did not find its way to one who, by dint of his hard and earnest work, so richly deserved it."

The tears stood in William Lake's eyes. "I can only thank you, sir, truly and fervently. I have no other means of testifying my gratitude—save by striving ever to do my duty untiringly, under my Lord and Master."

"I am sure you will do it," spoke Sir Robert, impulsively—and he was not a man of impulse in general. "You are not a married man, I believe?"

A faint red light came into the curate's cheeks. "I have not had the means to marry, Sir Robert. It has seemed to me, until this morning, that I never should have them."

"Well, you can marry now," was the laughing rejoinder; "I dare say you will." And the faint light deepened to two scarlet spots, as the curate heard it.

"Shall you give him the living, Robert?" asked Anne, when Mr. Lake had departed.

"Yes, love."

And if the reader has patience to wait until next month, he will hear what came of it all.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



CONFIDENCE.

(Translated from *Juste Ollivier*.)

BIRD among the mountains winging
To blue heights by men unknown,
In the bare rock's shelter clinging,
Where the storm-winds ceaseless moan—
Dare you face the tempest sweeping
Round this rugged, rocky crest?—
Wanderer, in our Father's keeping,
Frailest, feeblest, safely rest!"

Flower, upon the mountains growing,
'Mid the everlasting snow,
Whence the streamlet, silver flowing,
Seeks the village far below—
Round your home grim winter, creeping,
Surely hovers ever near?—
"Wanderer, in our Father's keeping,
There is nothing left to fear!"

Shepherd boy, the mountains ranging,
King of all this barren land,
As you climb, the prospect changing
Barer grows on either hand!—
"Sir, Heaven have you in its keeping
Life, they say, is hardly trod,
But, contented, waking, sleeping,
As for me, I trust in God!"

G. B. STUART.

ŒDIPUS AND LEAR.

BY MRS. JEROME MERCIER.

UNDER the clear heaven of Greece stands a temple whose clean-cut forms all indicate repose. The erect lines of the columns are finished by the architrave, which rests on them as the calm evening rests on the well-spent day. There is an end—a completion.

Under our cloudy skies let us observe a cathedral, which in every part, from base to pinnacle, speaks of aspiration, of incompleteness, of something dreamed of beyond that which the artist hand could fashion. The columns send an upward thought in the vaulting arch; the pointed arch presupposes a circle out of sight, and beyond stretch the wonders of the fretted roof; and higher still, the heaven-pointing finger of the spire tells that the idea of the maker came not from earth, and is, as it were, an enigmatic poem whose solution is on high.

The Greek philosophy, the Christian religion, have informed the art of these nations, and the variety which we observe in their architecture is reproduced in their literature. In the Greek tragedy we have a sense of stern calm, of destiny, against which there is no appeal, and of an inner force to endure that destiny with patience. This spirit it is—to put aside the intense beauty of the language—which makes the classics so valuable an element in study. It gives to our youth, overwrought with the feverish life of our own days, a taste of the restful and deliberate life of old, a momentary draught of Lethe.

The Greek plays give us time to think; they lay on the mind a weight of awe in the conscious presence of a power that overmasters our humanity in its outward circumstances; yet is there elevation in the added perception that in humanity lies another force which cannot be mastered. It is Prometheus against Jove; and in spite of all his sufferings we cannot but own Prometheus for the conqueror.

In the modern tragedy there is no such calm; the weight of destiny is not there to keep the other passions in subjection. The Christian truth that Humanity has been elevated by its union with Divinity, gives the passions another part to play. It is by them and through them, when under the guiding rule of Providence, that the being is led to something greater and more pure. Hence arise manifold complications; the simplicity of the older plot is laid aside; two or more plots are interwoven, like the tracery of a Gothic window, in confused harmony. In the classic play the hero is Destiny; in the modern, it is the God-led Man.

To verify these assertions, let us turn to the two masterpieces of tragedy, ancient and modern—the Œdipus Coloneus of Sophocles, the Lear of Shakespeare. The similarity of circumstances would seem strange, were it not for the obvious propriety of such circumstances to educe the deepest sympathy. Familiar as my readers must be with both the plots, they may forgive the rapid reproduction of one that we may have an opportunity to “look upon this picture and on this.”

It is the Colonean plain, birthplace of Sophocles himself. Within sight rise the temples and towers of Athens: but here are calm and shade, and a grove of bay, olive, and vine, musical with the notes of the nightingale. Yet there is a solemnity in the shades, for they are sacred and untrodden: “the awful goddesses possess them, daughters of Earth and Darkness.”

Along the high road which passes near the grove, come two forms: a man, prematurely old, in a beggar’s dress, yet kingly—

“His hair
Streams like a meteor to the troubled air.”

He walks, though majestically, yet with pain; not only from a lameness of the feet, but from the want of light to guide him—for he is blind, and blind with a shocking blindness. His eyes are not; two dreadful cavities remain where once they were. Their place is supplied by the bright, soft eyes of the girl on whose shoulder he leans; a maiden in the prime of her youth, beautiful with an unearthly beauty, with tender self-forgetting love and the steadfastness of a faithful soul. It is Antigone.

Gently, she seats her father on a stone beneath the shadow of the sacred trees, and presently a passer-by warns them anxiously to remove, lest the Eumenidæ be angered. But Œdipus, at once their victim and their votary, he who has borne their vengeance and seeks their aid to further his own, has no fear of them. All earthly sorrow has befallen him, the worst of sorrow; unwittingly the Fates have led him into crime. He, a good man, desirous of being and doing good, finds himself guilty of the death of his father, the dishonour and death of his mother. This is the weight of misery under which he groans, and his only consolation is his Antigone.

He remains sitting, a suppliant of the dreaded goddesses, and summons to his presence Theseus, the Athenian king, to whom he solemnly gives, in return for promised defence and hospitality, his wretched body, whose burial-place is fated to bring good fortune. Theseus, a noble figure, inspired by noble purpose, accepts the gift and its conditions, and the chorus breaks in with praises of the plain where the poet had his birth, of its narcissi with their beauteous clusters, of its golden saffron, and sleepless founts, and of its sacred and fruitful olive.

But hardly has their song ceased, ending the one ray of brightness

on the dark path of Œdipus, than a new danger comes to threaten him. Antigone announces the approach of their kinsman Creon, sometime ruler of Thebes, by whose will Œdipus was exiled from his home, but now greedy for the divinely-promised boon of his poor mortal body. Theseus has retired to complete a sacrifice, and Creon, first vainly trying persuasion, next tries force. The blind king's second daughter, Ismene, has joined the little party, coming in haste on her Sicilian steed, the Thessalian cap shielding her from the sun. She has brought sad tidings of the disunion between her brothers, struggling for the Theban crown. And now Creon bids his men to seize Ismene, who is offering in the grove libations to the goddesses; and then he himself lays his hands on Antigone. This is, perhaps, the sole point in the tragedy where the feelings which moisten the eye are touched. Those which have been hitherto and are hereafter moved bring thoughts which lie "too deep for tears." But here, the picture of the old blind man, vainly stretching out his empty arms, calling with a voice of agony for Antigone to touch him, and her despairing cry, "I cannot," move all the founts of pity in us. Antigone is gone; Œdipus scarcely hears the taunts of Creon, who, refusing to restore the girls at the entreaty of the chorus, further threatens an insult to the state of Athens by forcibly carrying away the blind king himself.

But Theseus returns at the cry of his insulted people, and proves that his promise was faithfully given. The children are restored to their father's arms: Antigone sends her loving voice before her to announce her coming to the parent who cannot see her approach, and Œdipus, with a sad prophetic joy, exclaims:

"What most I love, I clasp: nor can I be
In death unhappy if ye stand by me."

An interlude occurs showing—true to nature—the self-will and obstinacy which were ever the bane of Œdipus, unsoftened by sorrow or coming death. His son Polynices implores his father's aid in his approaching struggle for the crown—Fate having promised victory to the side favoured by Œdipus. Perhaps no passage in literature, except the imprecations of Lear on his unnatural daughters, can be compared to the denunciation of Œdipus on the son who, when in power, banished his own father, and his prophecy that he and his brother should die by each other's hand in the coming struggle. It is the fulfilment of this prophecy which, more even than her filial faith, has given Antigone her undying renown as the honourer of her brothers' corpses in the face of the utmost danger.

And now, Polynices having gone away, weeping selfish tears, the climax of the play approaches—the last scene in the life of Œdipus, than which, I dare to say, nothing has been conceived more sublime, more overpoweringly grand. In the realm of truth, the transit of Moses was more lonely, the transit of Elijah more tremendous;

but in the realm of fiction, no scene approaches the transit of Œdipus for both qualities combined.

The old man rises; he calls on Theseus and his daughters, but these no longer lead him. He leads the way, feeling a Divine Hand guiding him on to the destined place of his death. Into the silent shades of the sacred grove he leads the three; the rest is hidden.

The chorus remains, imploring for him that the gods will give him a painless end, and a messenger, entering, brings the news that Œdipus is gone. Standing near a cave where aforetime Theseus had parted from his ill-fated friend Pirithous, claimed by the powers of darkness, the aged monarch calls on his daughters to prepare his body for the grave; and then, clasping his hands above the heads of the weeping girls, he utters a blessing on them. But a solemn voice calls awfully: "Ho, Œdipus, why linger we?" and then, bidding farewell to the maidens, to whom Theseus promises protection, he is ready. The king alone remains. The end is silence. When the girls and the messenger look back, Œdipus is not, and the king is shading his eyes as from some light too awful for mortal vision.

Now with this drama compare our English Lear.

It is needless to recount in detail the story which we cannot have forgotten. The first point of difference which strikes us is the extreme simplicity of the Greek play, the absolute preservation of the unities. Although our sympathies are fully aroused, it is by the poet's art alone, unaided by scenery. One spot suffices for the locality of the drama: one day for its supposed duration.

In Lear, see how we change from the royal palace to Glo'ster's castle, to the Duke of Albany's, to a heath, to the country near Dover, reverting from time to time to the former places.

Then note in Œdipus the simplicity of plot—no plot at all according to our modern ideas, but rather one long scene; whereas in Lear we have two plots, both complex, and interwoven, as I said, like tracery. There is Glo'ster, whose pleasant vices have become instruments to plague him, suffering from the duplicity of his son: there the aged king, whose wilful, hot, proud, yet generous nature prepares the way for his daughter's cruelty, yet engages all our sympathy in his sufferings. Then the tender love of Cordelia, opposed to her sister's hardness, and their rivalries in love and hate, make a sort of third intrigue, co-acting with the former. Nor are either of these plots simple: each in itself is complicated by the mingled passions of every character, good and bad united, as in life, and tending to ultimate good or evil as the heart will or will not follow the Divine impulse. Though there is no religion in the play properly so called, and it is implied that the king and his followers were still heathens, the Christianity of Shakespeare's day informs the whole. There is throughout a recognition of a higher spirit overruling all, and the lesson is strongly impressed on us that if man

will but follow, however feebly, where his Maker leads, all things shall work together for good to him. So with Glo'ster. His bitter trials, the loss of his eyes, the treachery of Edmund, all lead his nature to a higher level: he sees his own folly, his Edgar's virtue, and we know that at the end of the drama a better Glo'ster is before us than he with whom it opens. It is the same with Lear. The words, "Take physic, Pomp," are, as it were, the motto of his part. Pride has been the real evil at the root of his sorrows, and we feel that his afflictions are all physic to expurgate this evil. The calm of Sophocles is not here: the play becomes a very hysterica passio of piled-up griefs, which would be unendurable and have too little of the pleasure which Aristotle prescribes even in tragedy, were it not for the sense we have throughout that the spirit of the king is being purified for a happier future. At first we feel more anger than love for him, as he curses and exiles his sweet child, *his* Antigone; but when we see him enter, his madness crushed out by the agony of sorrow, bearing her dead body, believing against hope in a breath to stain the mirror which he has held to her lips, our reverence and pity proclaim him a nobler king than before, and we eagerly hail the compensating frenzy which makes him die of joy in the belief that Cordelia still breathes.

In *Œdipus* there is no such aim. The monarch is not tamed and humanised by grief; his dying curse upon his son has no sign of remorse. We do not feel that he is rising to the level of greater spirits with whom his is to mingle in the shades. What we feel throughout is a calm conviction that a man, in himself noble and virtuous, can suffer no degradation even from the enmity of the gods. It is the struggle of grand humanity with fate, and the former is victorious.

Two such great works, so alike, yet so different; each showing an aged father and king, blessed in the love of one perfect child—the broken strength of the one leaning most touchingly on the tenderness of the other; the woes from false friends and from undeserved misfortunes; yet the spirit of the two so diverse; these can be compared; but the palm can scarcely be given to either. If the last scene appears the grander in *Œdipus*, the mystic disappearance of the blind king impressing us with an awe which the wholesale slaughter in *Lear* converts into a certain dissatisfaction, this is, perhaps, the only point in which such comparison can be made.

Reverting to our first figure, the simplicity of the Greek drama satisfies us with the sense of rest, of completion, of approval of that unconquerable dignity in manhood which reflects a lustre on our own humanity. On the other hand, the English play, like the English cathedral, charms and occupies our souls in unravelling so many lines combined in one exquisitely intricate web, the whole leading our thoughts through its beautiful complexities to a vision of holy calm above.

A LINK OF LOVE.

I.

I AM a confirmed old bachelor, as much as my sister—my dear companion and housekeeper—is a confirmed old maid. Our days have reached nearly to the allotted span of life, and the greater number of these have been passed in our little home in the dingy city, where I have practised as a lawyer for so many years. We have lived there so long that it has become almost part of ourselves. It is the place that saw my first client, and, better still, my first fee—small in amount, yet, oh, how sweet! and it is the place where I have scored my successes and striven to obliterate my defeats.

The whole of the ground floor is given up to business; tape and musty parchment reign paramount; but the three upper stories we retain for our private use. Others with increasing riches have moved westward, but we cling to our city home. We are wedded to the noisy bustle of the streets, the deep tones of St. Paul's marking the rapid progress of Time—and, like true-born Cockneys, we should miss the merry peal from the lofty steeple of our own Bow Church triumphantly lording it over the ancient Ward of Chepe.

Some seven years back Sir Rupert Marsland, an old client of mine, died, leaving his only child—a daughter—to my care. By his will he left Marsland Grange and everything of which he was possessed to his daughter. The will had been made shortly after her birth had left him a heart-broken widower. To drown his grief he plunged into the wildest scenes of dissipation, deeply mortgaging his beautiful estate to meet the demands such endless and costly extravagance entailed upon him.

Upon examining Sir Rupert's papers I found there was nothing but a proud old name for the orphan girl to inherit. The time-worn Grange and beautiful park, with its kingly oaks and spreading avenues—the home of the Marslands long before the Norman William usurped poor Harold's throne—would have to be sold to pay the old man's debts. I struggled hard to avoid a sale; I had to give way in the end, and the home of centuries seemed doomed to fall beneath the hammer.

Ethel Marsland, soon after her father's death, came to reside with us. She was a tall, elegant girl, with a fair, oval face. The nose was rather long and inclined to be straight—its stiffness being redeemed by the finely curving nostrils. The eyebrows were well-formed and boldly rounded, forming almost complete arches over the large hazel eyes, giving to the face a trustful, innocent expression. Delicate cherry lips, dimpled at their corners—the upper one shaped like a

Cupid's bow—and soft, wavy brown hair, threaded with a golden glint, completed a face which was almost childlike in its purity.

I shrank from the painful task of awakening to the stern reality of life the poor girl thrown homeless and penniless upon the mercies of a cold calculating world, before she had numbered seventeen years. Our home was open to her, and my sister and myself were more than willing to take the part of parents to the orphaned girl. But would this make amends to her for her cruel loss?—a loss which told her that she, the last of her race, must yield the home of her fathers to some stranger, who, deficient in sympathy with the traditions of the past, perhaps would see no fault in allowing the hand of the renovator to efface the records, teeming with legendary lore, of those who had been, but now were not.

It was a dreary November evening, and the sound of the wind and driving sleet without made the drawn curtains and piled-up fire seem the cosier by the contrast. A long day's work had tired me, and, in dressing-gown and slippers, I was enjoying the luxury of a quiet pipe and a chat with an old friend.

I had known Cuthbert Heriston since he was quite a boy. He was the sole representative of the great firm of "Cuthbert Heriston and Co.," East India merchants, and, as such, the owner of great wealth. He had startled me by asking my permission to woo Ethel for his wife. I looked at his grave face and thought of his forty years. Hitherto untouched by woman's love, I dreaded the ripened passionate strength of such feelings now that he had attained his prime. A carefully-lived youth had enabled him not only to preserve, but to increase his good looks; I was fain to admit that, despite his age, in appearance at least he would be a husband of whom any woman might justly feel proud. The beautiful curve of his noble head with its wealth of black waving hair—the rich, warm-tinted olive complexion and crisply curling beard were more like the attributes of an Assyrian warrior than those of a peaceful London merchant.

But would his manly beauty compensate for the twenty-three years difference between their ages? It would be more like father and daughter than husband and wife. This was the sole objection that I had to his proposals. His character I knew to be unimpeachable, and in the matter of settlements he was everything that could be expected. He offered to purchase the old Grange, and, freeing it from its encumbrances, settle it unconditionally upon Ethel.

"Let me speak to her—in your presence," he pleaded. "I ask no more. If she refuses me I *must* bear it; but it will be hard." I was moved by the warm, eager tones of the hitherto reserved and silent man: but love is of such omnipotence that it is not always safe to say him nay. If he cannot get in at the door he will jump in through the window.

I thought it best that Ethel should answer for herself, so I rang the bell and requested Martha, our old servant, to send her to me.

We neither of us spoke during the few minutes that elapsed before we heard her footsteps. Very beautiful she looked as she entered the room. Her black mourning dress, utterly devoid of ornament, fitted tightly to the figure. Its severe simplicity suited her classic beauty—the black colour bringing out in strong relief the delicate fairness of her complexion. Her soft eyes were still tremulous with the grief to which she had given way on learning that the Grange would have to be sold: for I had cowardly deputed to my sister the task of telling her the bitter truth.

Cuthbert rose as she approached, and placed a chair for her at the side of the fire, facing me, while he stood between us, one hand nervously resting on the table. Accepting the proffered seat, Ethel folded her delicate hands in her lap, and quietly waited for me to explain for what purpose I had sent for her.

In as few words as possible I unfolded to her Cuthbert's proposals, concluding with his generous offer to pay her father's debts and settle her old home on her unconditionally. It sounded as if I were offering her a bribe. I stammered and hesitated a little while speaking. It was unpleasant, but I did not feel that I should have been justified in concealing it from her. It formed part of Cuthbert's offer.

For a few moments she sat quite still, with her eyes cast down. I was beginning to fear that she had not understood me, and that I should have to commence my task again, but my apprehensions were relieved. Slowly raising her tear-swollen eyelids, while a faint flush suffused her pale cheeks, she looked at Cuthbert, and in a dreamy, measured voice said, as if she were repeating some assertion to herself that she half questioned:—

“And Marsland shall not be sold?”

Cuthbert winced at her calm, calculating tone.

“And Marsland shall not be sold,” he replied, in a slightly disappointed voice.

He moved from his place till he stood facing her, and, in rapid, passionate words, as if his very soul was speaking, addressed her.

“Ethel,” he pleaded, “what can I do, or say, to win your love? I can offer you an unstained name, a home—your father's home—and wealth; but do not accept me for these. Take me for love of myself. Say that you love me—that you will love me.”

There was an agonised pathos in his voice which somewhat surprised me. I could scarcely recognise the calm, prosaic man of business in the impassioned lover pleading so earnestly, as if for life. “Do not think of the years between us,” he continued, “my love can span them.” He paused at a loss for words, his depth of feeling stifling his utterance.

I watched Ethel curiously. Hitherto she had sat apparently unmoved. Her nature was too childlike to suppose her guilty of coquetry. It was more likely ignorance of love which caused her

immobility. We were silent for a few moments, and then she spoke, in a slightly faltering voice.

"You give me everything, Mr. Heriston," she said. "I have nothing to give you—but myself," she added, doubtfully.

"Yourself?" he cried; "I ask for nothing else. Give me that, and I am more than content. Say it again. Repeat these words after me: 'I will be your wife, Cuthbert,' and he glanced eagerly at her.

Low, but distinct, the longed-for words came. "I will be your wife—Cuthbert."

"My wife!" he re-echoed, in a voice of indescribable joy. "My *darling!*" and he held out his arms towards her. She placed her two hands in his. He grasped them quickly, and drew her towards him as if he would crush her to his heart; but something indefinable—perhaps the absence of all passion from her surprised, innocent gaze—stopped him. A saddened, subdued expression spread over his face, banishing its rapturous brightness, as, checking the impulse, he raised her hands, and bowing his shapely head with manly courtesy, he pressed them to his passionate lips.

And thus they plighted their troth—the lovers' kiss sealing life's most important contract. For joy, or woe? Who could say?

II.

FIVE summers had come and gone since Cuthbert Heriston and Ethel Marsland, standing in the quaint old city church, had become one. The wedding, by Ethel's own desire, was very quiet. No friend was present save my sister and myself. A holy building—a few solemn words—and a tiny circlet of gold—a few scratches of the pen—and all was over. A new life had begun.

It was again dreary November. The curtains were drawn, and the merry flames went crackling up the chimney. The kettle was singing a weird melody, and old Tom sits blinking his eyes in the cheerful light, contentedly purring.

"What a terrible night!" exclaimed Mary, pausing in her pleasant occupation of buttering the muffins, to listen to the blast which shook the house and to the pelting of the rain. "I don't remember such a night since Ethel and Cuthbert were engaged. What a strange thing that we never hear from them now! It is more than six months since Ethel wrote. You may be very wise, John," she continued, with sisterly criticism, "but I think it would have been better to have had a little less wisdom once. I don't think there is much happiness to spare in that home. Nor is it to be wondered at. A cold, grave, reserved man such as Cuthbert Heriston to marry that child! He is old enough to be her father."

I was about to defend myself against this accusation, but was stopped by a loud ringing of the bell. "Who can that be?" cried

Mary, dropping the knife in her astonishment ; for an evening visitor was a rare event with us. She opened the door and walked to the head of the staircase to listen. "John, John," she called out as she hurried down the stairs, "Cuthbert Heriston, as I'm a living woman !"

I hastily followed her, to welcome our unexpected guest. "Where is Ethel ?" I asked, as I warmly grasped his hand and assisted Martha to relieve him of his wet cloak and wraps.

"I have left her at Marsland," he replied—rather curtly I thought.

Not liking to press the question, or to ask for explanations, I changed the subject, and we returned to the bright room and deserted tea-table. But, somehow, some unnatural constraint seemed to have fallen upon us. Some presage or shadow of evil had entered with the outside damp and misery and chilled our warmth.

Cuthbert took the seat I placed for him in front of the fire and spread his hands to the warm blaze. We sat in silence while Mary was directing Martha to put something on the table more substantial than muffins. I looked at Cuthbert, and was shocked at his altered appearance. The jet black hair was plentifully streaked with grey. But it was not the changed hair which troubled me. The great change was in the face. The cheeks were drawn and hollow—as if by mental suffering—and the eyes were sunk and had dark rims round them. He seemed annoyed at being so closely observed. Turning to me abruptly, he said in a sharp voice :

"How long will it take you to prepare a deed of separation ?"

"A deed of separation !—Heaven preserve us !" exclaimed Mary, in her surprise and agitation pouring the tea into the sugar basin instead of into the cup that Martha had just brought for Mr. Heriston.

Without heeding Mary's exclamation, or waiting for my reply, Cuthbert rose from his seat, and placing his hands on the mantel-piece, leaned his forehead upon them so as to conceal his face. In a low, husky voice, utterly unlike his full, rich baritone, he said : "It is best that it should be so." He spoke musingly, as if answering some mental reasoning, or thinking aloud, rather than addressing us. "I have tried to out-live my folly," he went on. "I was mad to suppose that a child—innocent of the world and life—could love as I would have a *wife* to love. It was my own fault. I bought her with Marsland." His tone grew very bitter here. "Well—she has blighted my life, but she may retain the price. She shall have Marsland and all I have for herself and our—our boy."

His voice was agitated as he referred to their only child—then about three years of age. Conquering, with an effort, his emotion, he raised his head, and in calmer tones explained that he intended leaving England, and as he contemplated never returning, he wished to appoint me his son's guardian and trustee of all his property, for the lad's benefit and that of his mother.

Mary waited till he had ceased speaking. Pushing the tea-tray from her, she rose from her seat and went to his side. Placing her hands on his arm with a loving gesture, and a tear dimming her bright black eyes, she said, gravely, "Cuthbert, what is this you are about to do? Do you fully realise the seriousness of the step you meditate taking?" And then, with tender, loving words, she besought him to explain his conduct—soothing him as she would a heart-broken child. He listened to her quietly as she continued.

"You have told us nothing that can justify you in leaving your wife. You seem to fancy that she has no love for you—how do you know it? Have you ever really sought her love? You are so cold and reserved, and she is so young, poor dear, that she may not understand you. I have known you since you were as high as this table, and can answer for the warmth of a loving heart; but it is very sensitive. Like the snail, it is but too ready to shut itself up in its shell. Go back to your wife; take her to your arms and pillow her head upon your breast. Her love will soon thaw the icy reserve of your heart, and set free the warm stream which is now imprisoned."

The unhappy man only shook his head despondingly. I saw that Mary was beginning to lose patience. Her voice grew sharp as she exclaimed:

"I have no patience with such folly. You have no right to leave Ethel without a protector—even though you do think that she does not care for you. What is your wealth to her in comparison with the loss of a husband—and of a father to her boy?"

He looked at her sadly as he answered: "You have not heard all. I feel sure that she is innocent."

"Innocent!" interrupted Mary, with a gasp of astonishment.

"Yes, pray God she is—but—*she loves another!*"

The words were shot out with a fierce energy of passion, and his handsome face flushed at the mention of his shame.

"Loves another!"

Mary repeated the words mechanically, trying to gather their meaning; then, suddenly, as their import became clear to her, the valiant little woman started. Her eyes flashed, and she thrust out her hands, with dramatic action, as she cried in indignant tones, "As I am a living woman, Cuthbert Heriston, it is false!"

"Gently, gently," I cried soothingly. "Cuthbert would never bring so serious an accusation against his wife without some reason. I have very little doubt but that there has been some mistake which is capable of explanation."

"Explain that," cried Cuthbert, curtly, throwing a small note on to the table.

I took it up and opened it. The paper was strongly scented, and had a small gilt monogram in one corner. The handwriting was bold and flowing, the characters being formed in that dashing style adopted

as frequently by women as by men. I read the words slowly—to myself, and tried to keep all expression from my face ; for I felt that Cuthbert was closely watching me. The note was very short, and ran as follows :—

“Monday night.

“My ever loved one,—Drop me a line to say when old Grumps (your respected lord and master, I mean) will be out of the way. Au revoir, ma charmante. Till then

“Your own,

“GEORGE REX.”

I silently handed the letter to my sister, but, like a true woman, she pursed up her lips and told me to keep it to myself ; it was not her habit to read other people’s letters without the owner’s permission ; at which sisterly sneer I felt considerably snubbed.

“Where did you find it ? who gave it to you ?” she asked Cuthbert. His cheeks flushed and he hesitated before he answered, but at last confessed that it had been brought to him by a discarded maid of his wife’s, who told him that she had found it in the pocket of an old dress her mistress had given to her.

“A mare’s nest,” remarked Mary, jumping to a conclusion, like the rest of her sex. Women generally, by a kind of instinct, manage to hit the right nail on the head. While the male mind is groping its way through a morass of logic, carefully testing each step, woman, with a hop, skip, and a jump, alights at the goal unexhausted and dry-shod.

Our efforts to convince Cuthbert that this was the case proved futile. His determined, dogged nature had brooded over the grievance till it had become, if possible, more than real. He was willing to admit—despite the letter—that he had implicit faith in his wife’s innocence of conduct, in testimony of which he was prepared to leave her child with her ; but he felt convinced that his presence was distasteful and a source of unhappiness to her, and had therefore resolved on separation. Notwithstanding his pretended indifference about the letter, I could perceive that *it* was the sting that was galling. Coupling it with his wife’s frequent tears and seeming coldness towards him, it was scarcely to be wondered at that he should have some suspicions.

Not being able to leave my business, I wrote the next day to Ethel, inviting her and her little boy to come and stay with us. She accepted the invitation, and they were soon installed as our guests. The five years had ripened the beauty of the child-wife. The artless simplicity of the girl had merged in the steady self-possession of the matron. She greeted me somewhat nervously, and glanced anxiously round the room, as if expecting to see some one, giving a little sigh of disappointment at finding no one but Mary and myself.

Mary generally takes time by the forelock ; so, without any pre-

liminaries, she at once attacked Ethel upon the subject of her husband, and grew quite eloquent as she described the warmth of his love. A bright colour flushed the young wife's cheeks. "Do you really think that he loves me?" she asked in an eager voice. Then hurriedly answering her own question, she continued in a saddened tone: "No—I am too young—but I *do* love him," and she bowed her head over her child's chestnut curls and wept passionately. The poor little fellow, alarmed at her grief, tried to pull her hands from her face. Finding his efforts ineffectual, he burst into tears and gave a loud cry for his father. As the word smote her ears Ethel angrily thrust the child from her lap. "You have no father, child," she cried, clenching her hands. Her eyes flashed, but filled with tears, as she added, in a pained voice, "And I no husband. The love that belongs to your poor forsaken mother is given to another."

"Oh, you wicked, ungrateful girl to dare to say such unfounded things of a father to his child!" cried Mary warmly, as she drew the weeping boy to her and tried to calm his grief.

"Unfounded! Would that I could say so; but what can I think when I read this?" Ethel drew a half-sheet of blotting-paper from her pocket. "I found it in his study after he had left."

She handed it to me, bidding me hold it to the light. I did so, and recognised Cuthbert's handwriting. It was the conclusion of a letter. It was impossible to decipher every word, but the following were very distinct:—

"I shall be in London on Thursday . . . expect me about lunch time. Mrs. Heriston stays at Marsland. I enclose you a cheque for £50, payable to your order, to meet immediate expenses, hoping to hear that brighter days are in store.

"Yours,

"C. HERISTON."

"Well," I said, cautiously, "I do not see very much in this. It might have been written to a gentleman."

"Is 'Mrs. Sylvester, Post Office, Blackheath. To be left till called for,' a gentleman?" quietly asked Ethel, pointing to the words at the bottom of the page, evidently where the direction on the envelope had been blotted.

"All very well," I answered. "But how do you know that *that* letter was enclosed in the envelope bearing that address? He might have written more than one letter, and that address may refer to something very different."

"True," she replied, "and so, at first, I argued to myself; but all doubt is now dispelled, for I enquired at the bank and learnt that yesterday a young woman presented a cheque of my husband's for £50, and that the name she signed on the back was 'Harriett Sylvester'!"

I felt rather posed at this, and, I expect, must have looked so, for Mary, who had been impatiently fidgeting while I was reading the letter, exclaimed sharply :

“What a stupid you are, John ! It is all stuff and nonsense !” Turning to Ethel, she continued : “Take the advice of an old woman, my dear. Go to your husband—open your heart and tell him everything. You are a regular pair of geese. There is nothing that is not capable of explanation, and I’ll stake my word on Cuthbert’s honour. He may be queer tempered, but he’s a gentleman. What is the good of knocking your heads against a wall when the gate is standing ajar ?”

Mary’s arguments seemed to have some effect. At one time I thought Ethel’s pride was softening, but an unfortunate reference of mine to the letter which had been found in her old dress awoke an amount of obstinate resistance with which we were quite unable to cope. She proudly declined to give any explanation, and as Cuthbert, when appealed to by me, also refused an explanation about Harriett Sylvester, our efforts to bring about a reconciliation came to a standstill.

The green-eyed monster and his worthy relative, Pride, had taken possession of Marsland and its unhappy owners. Very reluctantly, I prepared the deed which was to separate those who, in the sight of God, had vowed to cleave together, for better, for worse, as long as life lasted.

It was the last day of the year. The merry Yule-tide had passed by, robbed of its wonted brightness, for a cloud hung over us. The old year, with its burden of past joys and sorrows, was about to die.

The deed I had prepared was a very simple one. A yearly sum of £800 was reserved to Cuthbert, and the rest of his wealth was settled on Ethel and her boy. I was to occupy the responsible position of guardian—a position I would have shirked could I have found any excuse for doing so.

I felt very sad as the hands of the clock approached the hour of eight—the time fixed for Cuthbert to call and sign the deed. The parchment, with its stiff, formal writing, and large seals, was spread out on the table, and everything was in readiness for the finale to the short-lived marriage. As a last hope I had determined that the husband and wife should meet once again before parting, perhaps for ever—for on the morrow Cuthbert was to sail for the far West in a vain search for forgetfulness.

Cuthbert, at last, was announced. He entered, clad in his travelling wraps, and, with his tall commanding stature, looking very manly. His handsome face was pale, and the stern features set with a look of rigid determination. After a few constrained words of greeting, he took up a pen to sign the deed, excusing himself for his haste by explaining that he had but very little time to spare, as he had to

catch the nine o'clock train to Liverpool. Bidding him wait, I rang the bell twice, the signal for Mary to send Ethel to us.

Trusting to Ethel's ignorance of the law, I had made her believe that it was necessary that she should sign the deed in the presence of her husband. But for this stratagem I feel certain that she would have refused to meet him.

In a few moments Ethel glided into the room. Cuthbert started at her—to him—unexpected appearance, for I had not told him that she would be present. Very pale and lovely she looked as, with stately grace, she slowly approached the table—acknowledging her husband's presence by a slight inclination of her queenly head. Her soft wavy hair was brushed from the face and fastened at the back in a small coil. She had discarded all jewels and ornaments, simply retaining her wedding-ring. Afterwards, Mary told me that before she left her room she pulled it half off, but, suddenly checking herself, had restored it to its place, saying: "No, my husband put it there, and there it shall remain till he removes it."

My heart beat hopefully as I observed that her dress was the same she had worn six years ago, when she had surrendered her life and happiness to Cuthbert's keeping. The plain, well-fitting black dress—notwithstanding that it was somewhat old-fashioned—suited her marble paleness and statuesque beauty.

I resolved to make a last appeal to their better feelings, and, in a few moving words, I did my best to arrest them from a step which I felt was the maddest folly. I was very much agitated as I entreated them, if not for their own sakes, at least for that of the little one who called them father and mother, to join hands again, and, letting the past bury the past, start anew in the battle of life, and by mutual concessions each one lend the other that loving support that even the strongest of us must, at times, require.

Ethel seemed moved at my words. Her bosom heaved, and with difficulty she restrained her emotion. I watched Cuthbert anxiously. The corners of his mouth twitched nervously, but he remained silent. Ethel raised her eyes pleadingly to his, and her lips slightly parted as if she were about to speak. One answering look and her arms would have been round him. In vain! He resolutely averted his face. A faint flush came into Ethel's cheeks as her spirit rose at this silent rejection of her appeal. Seizing the pen which Cuthbert had dropped when she entered the room, she dipped it into the ink, and, turning to me, asked, in firm, indignant tones, where she should sign the deed. Cuthbert still maintained silence. I held down the parchment and pointed to the place where she should sign the deed. Her pen was on the parchment, and she was preparing to follow my instructions, when the door of the room slowly opened. She paused, and we all raised our eyes to ascertain the cause of the interruption. The door was now wide open, and—as in a frame, set off by the surrounding darkness—stood a little figure, clad in white. The tiny

feet, bare of covering, peeped out beneath the robe which was held up by the child's hands, and the short chestnut curls swept back from the wistful cherub face in wavy billows. With shy looks the child advanced slowly into the room, till, raising his eyes, he caught sight of his mother. With a glad cry he ran to her and threw himself into her arms. Then—a bright look animating his pretty face—he called to his father.

It was enough! The ice was broken. Love was triumphant, and Pride—the destroyer of the peace of so many homes—defeated. Cuthbert opened his arms and cried in a voice of wondrous love, "My wife!" His cry was echoed by Ethel as, with happy tears, she was drawn within his arms and pressed in his fond embrace. With willing love she was crushed to his heart, that beat in passionate unison with her own; her eager lips resealing the solemn contract but a little while back so nearly broken. And thus, in Heaven's sight, again their troth was plighted. No word of explanation as to the past. Each one believed in and trusted the other.

With my eyes in rather a watery condition, I groped my way to the library, where I found Mary on the verge of hysterics.

"Oh, John, I'm so happy!" she cried, throwing her arms round my neck and kissing me. "I saw it all—from the stairs."

After her excitement had somewhat calmed she explained to me how it had happened. It appeared that after Ethel had left her she could not rest, and had wandered uneasily from room to room. Hearing the child moving in his crib, she had hastened to his side, and while soothing him had conceived the idea which had proved so successful in its result. Acting with her usual impulse, she snatched the lad from the bed and carried him down the stairs, and, standing him without the door—the handle of which she gently turned—had left him to the guidance of One before whom we poor mortals are but as dust.

We waited patiently, but no sound came from the room where we had left Ethel and Cuthbert. Slowly the hours crept on, and we began to get not only very impatient, but sleepy.

"Good gracious, John, what a smell of burning!" cried Mary, awaking, as the clock struck eleven, from a little doze into which she had fallen. "It smells something like burnt feathers. Perhaps Ethel has fainted. Oh, depend upon it she has, and Cuthbert is burning my beautiful feather-screen to bring her to!" and away hustled the little woman to the rescue of the cherished screen. I followed, expecting to see Ethel in a death-like swoon. But no such thing. She was sitting by the fire—in *my* arm-chair—looking very bright and happy despite her swollen eyelids; for tears come to women as readily in joy as in grief. Little Cuthbert was peacefully sleeping in his mother's lap, his hands clasped in one of hers. With her other hand she was holding her handkerchief to her nose. And well she might do so, for Cuthbert, the poker in one hand and the

tongs in the other, was forcibly pushing the ill-fated deed of separation between the bars of the grate. No wonder that our olfactory nerves had objected to the smell! Burnt parchment certainly cannot be considered an agreeable scent.

With silent graspings of the hand—more eloquent than speech—we drew our chairs round the fire and watched the last writhing curls of the blackened deed as it spluttered and hissed out its brief existence.

"Cuthbert, dear," at last exclaimed Ethel, breaking the silence with a low-toned but happy voice, "you have been very generous: you have not asked a single question about George Rex." A slight blush suffused her cheeks as she spoke. "I value your silence, dearest," she continued, "because it shows that you trust me; but I think I ought to speak, and in the presence of these dear friends, to whom an explanation is due, almost as much as to yourself."

"Stop, Ethel!" cried Cuthbert, holding up his hand. "As far as I am concerned I am willing to remain in ignorance about George Rex. In my madness I thought that you did not love me, and that another had sought—and perhaps gained—the heart which I feared had never been mine. Now my folly is at an end, and I know that which I prize most in life—my wife's love—is, and always has been, mine. Do not recall my madness. Let it be as a painful dream from which I have been aroused."

I saw the struggle that was taking place in his mind between his generous resolve to show implicit trust in his wife and his natural desire to have the mystery explained. I think Ethel also perceived it. With womanly tact she said smilingly, "Yes, but in the meantime some unknown young man lies under the imputation of having written me an impertinent letter. I *must* clear his reputation; so, to begin"—she gave an amused, merry glance, adopting a dramatic tone—"George Rex is not a young man, but *a lady*, and not very young!" She fairly burst out laughing at our astonished looks.

"What a goose I am, to be sure!" said Mary. "I declare my memory is getting like a sieve, everything runs out. I know whom you mean: that ugly old frump of a woman's rights woman that I can't bear, and who hates all mankind and yet lives and acts as if she were one of the despised sex. Despised sex, indeed! Ugh! I've no patience with her."

"You have guessed rightly," assented Ethel, with a laugh. "She has seen Cuthbert but once, and as during that interview he was very silent—according to his usual polite custom with strangers—and as he also did not seem very much struck with Miss King's mental superiority, he may congratulate himself that he did not receive a worse name than that of 'Old Grumps.'"

"But is 'George Rex' a woman's name?" I ask.

"Oh, no, her real name is Georgiana King, but with rather feeble wit she has made a pun of her signature. She has always been called

‘George,’ and some having suggested that, from her masterful disposition, she ought to be called King George instead of George King, she adopted the suggestion. By turning her surname into Latin she gets the ‘Rex,’ and hence the meaning of the dreadful scrawl she calls her signature, and which is an imitation of that of his deceased Majesty King George the First !”

“Well, good people,” cried Mary, “since explanations are flying about the room, perhaps we shall hear one about Mrs. Sylvester.”

Cuthbert moved uneasily, as if reluctant to speak, but Ethel came to his relief. Leaning forward, she placed her hand, with a loving gesture, upon her husband’s arm, and said in a voice moved by deep feeling : “I know all. How, when Ralph Sylvester sank from bad to worse and was discarded by his relatives, his old schoolfellow remembered the past and for its sake generously strove to reclaim the black sheep, and, notwithstanding disheartening ill-success, stood by him till death stopped his evil career. I also know who it was that restored the poor girl the dead man had called a wife, to the home from which she had been lured. It was through poor Georgey Rex that I learnt this. She happened to know the friends of the widowed girl, who gratefully remembered her benefactor. The letter containing all this news came by post this morning. Poor Georgey apologises most handsomely for having nicknamed you ‘Old Grumps,’ declaring that henceforth she will spell the word with a ‘t’ instead of a ‘g.’”

The hand that pressed his was tenderly clasped. “This link shall always bind us together, dearest,” he gently whispered, as, first kissing the mother, he impressed a kiss on the silky curls of the child sleeping in her arms.

The moments sped by. Untiring time knows no lagging footsteps. Ever onwards. But a few short moments, and the year that now was would be no more—the new year, with its unknown tale of life, would have commenced its career. We stood by the open window and listened for the first glad peal heralding the advent of another space of time.

Loudly clashed the merry peals cleaving the startled air, and, borne on the wings of the night wind, fitfully floated the mellow sound of Stepney’s silver chime. “Boom !” thundered out from St. Paul’s lordly towers, and as we counted the twelve strokes, hands were grasped and loving wishes whispered : for another year was born.

Cuthbert’s arm stole round Ethel’s waist. “My dear wife,” he fondly whispered.

“*Dear ?*” And she raised her eyes to his with loving, questioning gaze. His answer was heard by her alone, as, gathering her in his arms, his lips sought hers. Heart to heart—soul to soul—henceforth not two, but one !

F. H. S.

THE USE OF FICTION.

IT is with feelings of deep commiseration we regard those unfortunate beings who lived in the days when there were no novels! How comparatively narrow must their views of life have been! How they must have needed some means of interesting the mind and of whiling away the tedious hours! No wonder those were the days of card-playing and scandal; of petty gossip and culpable intrigue.

The circulating library and the three-volume novel are now institutions, as much the product of this fast-going age as transit by steam, or the electric telegraph. Formerly, works of fiction were rare productions, appearing at long intervals and addressed to the few, not to the many. The prejudice against novel-reading that once existed is easily understood; the novels to which our immediate predecessors had access being, with few exceptions, coarse in the extreme, or silly in an equal degree; while the writers of romance presented to their readers views of life and human nature so utterly false, that we cannot wonder at solicitous parents forbidding the perusal of works so likely to give erroneous impressions of men and things, and to create discontent with the world as it actually exists. But so prone is youth to escape from every-day life into the realms of imagination, that these prohibited books were eagerly read by stealth, and candles were burnt out when the head should have been laid on the pillow, while the fortunes of hero and heroine were followed with breathless interest. The captivating hero being a bandit, perhaps, with gloomy mien, and fiery eyes, but with magnanimous soul; or a languishing viscount who kneels at his mistress's feet, and pours out his passion in the choicest phrases. The heroine, who was of course supremely beautiful, was generally dressed in white muslin, and always had her harp with her, and in tune, whatever adventures she went through, or whatever dangers she was called upon to undergo.

Then there was the didactic novel, only less dangerous, because more dull; but quite as unreal, and thus quite as likely to lead astray. These are the stories written with a set purpose, where puppets are set up to be endowed with some special attribute, where the hero and heroine are so immaculate that no possible interest can be excited in their fate, the reader being perfectly aware beforehand that creatures so exempt from human error could never fall under temptation, and that, in the end, virtue would be rewarded, and vice punished, by means of the traditional mad bull, or in some equally irrelevant manner.

The question then comes, ought a novel to have a moral purpose? Is this its use? If a novel is to be considered as a work of art, it

must stand or fall as such, without any consideration of its purport. The finest novels of the day cannot be said to be in any way clearly didactic. Morality alone will not make a good work of fiction. But in order to excite interest, must such works be necessarily immoral? No; decidedly not. Fiction would fail to represent life in its entirety without an admixture of evil; there must be shadow as well as light; but the universal instinct is on the side of good. The characters that most interest are those that have a balance of estimable and lovable qualities on their side. A taste so depraved as to prefer Goneril to Cordelia, or to take the part of Iachimo against Imogen, is quite inconceivable. Nevertheless it is undoubtedly the fact that a story will affect the reader in proportion as its characters are lifelike; and if the faulty are made to think and act as human beings, they will absorb the interest to the exclusion of those intended to be more perfect, but who are mere misty shadows without distinct individuality.

The clearer insight of the educated reader of the present day into the phenomena of life, demands that the characters presented to it in a work of fiction, shall be real, human, susceptible of growth and decay, moral as well as corporeal; that the way in which circumstances affect them, and they succumb to circumstances, or mould their fortunes by their stronger will, must be the natural outcome of such characters as are set before us; that the strong should stand, and the weak fall, by their own strength and weakness, and not as the author shall choose to pull the string.

Let a novel be thus faithful to life, and it cannot fail to be wholesome in its effect on the mind. It teaches us as history teaches us, as society teaches us, and to those who, from whatever circumstances, are in a great measure debarred from the fellowship of mankind, it comes to take the place of the instruction to be derived from that source. In many cases, the novel may be much more efficacious than the sermon. In lashing vice with the cutting whip of satire; in holding up our shams, and affectations, and pretences to ridicule, a most potent weapon. In tearing the mask from hypocrisy, and the covering from selfishness, and meanness, and greed, the novelist may do more than the professedly moral teacher, because he may reach those who hold aloof from more direct and serious teaching, but who may recognize their own ignoble lineaments in the mirror thus held up to nature.

Another use of a really good work of fiction is that it binds us more closely to our fellow men. It extends our views of humanity; it displays to us the world in which we live, in a wider aspect; it brings us into contact with different grades of society, with types of character, with hardships and sufferings of which we might otherwise have remained ignorant. It shows us the gem of virtue in the little vagrant, only awaiting the fostering hand to unfold itself; the bitter struggles with want and poverty, amongst those too refined, and too

proud, to sue for help; the misery of the starving seamstress; the governess's life of dreary isolation; the man of genius writhing under undeserved neglect; talent wasted for want of opportunity—all these, and such as these, are placed vividly before eyes unaccustomed to look beyond the narrow circle of home, and appeal to the heart, calling forth sympathetic emotion. It has been objected that this expenditure of sensibility on scenes of fictitious sorrow leaves the heart callous to real suffering; but it is difficult to know why this should be. The human heart is not a vessel that can contain only a certain quantity of love and sympathy, but rather a perennial spring; the rock of selfishness and indifference once touched, by whatever means, and the waters may flow on without stint or measure.

Inestimable in their uses also are the noble thoughts, the poetic imaginings, cast gemlike here and there throughout a work of fiction. Who shall say what chord they may strike, what power they may possess to purify and elevate? Who shall say how the taste may be refined, the languid soul roused to activity, by the subtle touch of the novelist? Nor is what may be considered its minor office by any means to be despised. Supposing a story is avowedly written only to amuse, is it therefore a thing of no value? Ask the over-wearied, the sick, the lonely. Ask those who feel not only the delight, but the necessity of sometimes forgetting themselves, their cares and vexations.

The novel opens out to these weary ones another world than their own. The dull walls of the study or the sick room disappear, and the imagination takes flight to breezy moors, or sounding seas, or the rustle and whisper of woodlands; or perhaps to the stir of busy life in cities, to the splendour of luxury, or the pitifulness of squalor. There, in the novel, events are hastening on with rapid tread, and passions are at work, and the movements and colour of a broader and more vivid life cause the pulses to quicken, and the blood to course through the veins with a fuller throb, and the spirit returns from its brief sojourn in dreamland, restored and recreated, better prepared for its duties of doing, or bearing, more ready to resume the "heat and burden of the day."

Thus, then, the school of fiction that may be said to have taken its rise with Scott, and to have flowed on continuously since—the realistic school, purified from the grossness that deformed the pages of the elder realists, Fielding and Smollett—must be regarded as a great educational force, as well as a never-ending source of pleasure and amusement: and, from both these points of view, wielding a special power, it demands special praise.



A VILLAGE TALE.

THE little bronze clock upon the mantelpiece chimed five, and Azubah Shelton looked anxiously down the road toward the village; while she softly hummed a favourite air, in accompaniment to her busy fingers, which were making a muslin collar, edged with lace, for her mother. She was a queenly girl—this Azubah Shelton, tall, with a splendidly proportioned figure, shapely hands and feet, and a fair womanly face, lighted with wonderful grey eyes. Her shining dark brown hair, wound round and round her graceful head, made more noticeable the marble whiteness of her skin, changed only in the sweetly curved lips to a deep carnation. Sitting there by the window, stately and upright, her dark silk dress fitting to perfection the exquisite outlines of her figure, she looked more fit to be a royal princess, than the retiring daughter of a village surgeon, whose life and practice were obscure at best. But no princess, sweeping her satin train through marble halls, was ever half so happy as Azubah Shelton at this moment, while she sat there at her sewing, singing blithely, and glancing continually through the open window, and down towards the sunny road that led from the small village. That which makes a heaven of every heart, for the short time it can reign in it, filled hers—love's first dream.

"What time is it, Azubah?" called her mother's voice from the next room.

"A few minutes after five, mamma," answered Azubah, without glancing at the clock, but looking down the road again.

"Not more!" exclaimed Mrs. Shelton. "I was thinking Mr. Cross was late: but he cannot be if it is only that."

"It is just five minutes past."

"Well, the tea is quite ready: and I wish your papa would come in, as well as Mr. Cross."

"I daresay papa will not be long," said the girl—and began again her soft, low song.

Mr. Shelton was the only medical practitioner in this retired village, Ebley; a village remarkable for one thing only—its noted classical school for boys, which in these days would inevitably have been styled a college. A gentleman named Cross had come down to it the previous January as third master; and he brought a letter of introduction to the surgeon; or, strictly speaking, to Mrs. Shelton. It was written by their second daughter, who was at school in London, and ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR MAMMA,—Mr. Randolph Cross is appointed to the third mastership at Ebley. He was one of our masters until now, and I want you and papa to be kind to him, for he has been very kind to me.

"Your loving child,

"EDNA."

Mr. and Mrs. Shelton, simple-minded, large-hearted people, utterly unversed in the ways of the great world, homely in their ways, plain in their habits, welcomed Mr. Cross warmly: anybody who had been "kind" to their little Edna, all that long way removed from them, deserved a double share of kindness at their hands in return—and Mr. Cross received it. He had found lodgings at the very next house to theirs, a few yards higher up the road, but he was really quite as much at the surgeon's house as in his own, and had become very intimate with them. Three hours ago, as he passed by to afternoon school, Mrs. Shelton was at the garden gate; he stayed to speak to her, and she had said, "Will you come in to tea?"

The surgeon's work had been up-hill for many years; consequently he had married late in life. He was turned sixty now, his wife was approaching it; they looked old to have these young daughters. Azubah was three-and-twenty, Edna four years younger. Her education had been rather neglected, so she was sent to this finishing school in London for a year. In June she would come home for good, and this was April. Azubah was an heiress in a small way, an uncle having left her three thousand pounds. Edna had nothing.

"Nobody in sight yet, Azubah?" again demanded her mother.

"Some one is coming now, mamma: I presume it is Mr. Cross."

Presume! As though she did not know the graceful swing of that tall figure as far as her eye could reach or single him out among a multitude!

A few moments later a shadow fell across the window; Randolph Cross leaned over the broad sill, and laid a bunch of yellow buttercups in Azubah's lap. "Oh, where did you find them?" she cried in a voice as melodious as a wood thrush, just as though those common buttercups had been the choicest of flowers. "I have not seen any before, this spring."

"I found them in the field opposite the school," he answered laughingly—and then broke into a verse of an old song.

"Oh, down in the valley, where the buttercups grow,

Lives a sweet, sweet maiden, with a brow of snow;

A sweet, sweet maiden, yet a robber bold is she,

For she's robbed me of my heart, and will not give it back to me."

And Mr. Randolph Cross looked down upon the fair face before him with his dark, bewildering eyes. Azubah's cheeks flushed softly as she met the earnest gaze of those speaking eyes, that seemed to

say so much to her heart ; and the words of the song and the sound of his musical voice thrilled her through and through with a delicious joy.

She was reading her first lesson of love, this woman of three-and-twenty ; for love had been a sealed book to her, until this man came and opened its covers, and bade her read its enchanting pages.

She had not frittered away her heart in her teens as so many girls do, giving a little to this man and a little to that, by which the freshness and purity of the heart is squandered, and the power of loving truly and tenderly is lost for ever. No : Azubah Shelton had kept her heart whole and untouched, simply because no prince had come to awaken it with his fairy wand. She had dreamed her dreams as young girls do ; she had her ideal of her hero, and had been vaguely longing for him all these years. Yet when she read the tales of love and romance in fiction, she smiled to herself, thinking them overdrawn.

She remembered—remembered it now—an argument she held with Mr. Cross on this very subject when he first came to Ebley. They were discussing some book both had recently read.

“ But don’t you believe in the existence of passionate, of all-absorbing love ? ” Mr. Cross had asked, and she had responded, “ Not as it is portrayed in the literature of the day. It seems to me unnatural and unreal, and I, at least, cannot understand that mighty passion called love, of which I read so much, that it should be so all-potent, so overwhelming. ” And, looking into her fathomless grey eyes, Randolph Cross suddenly asked himself a question that had not before crossed his vain and shallow brain—whether it would not be possible to stir the depths of this virgin heart, and whether it would be worth his while to do it. He decided that it would be ; it might afford him great amusement in this out-of-the-world spot to which adverse fate had consigned him : and, taking a surreptitious glance at his handsome self in Mrs. Shelton’s old-fashioned chimney-glass, he set about the work insinuatingly there and then. Nevertheless, before he went to his rest that night, Mr. Cross wrote, sealed, and addressed the following letter :—

“ MY DEAR EDNA,—I have just come in from the comfortable parlour of your most comfortable home, and the hands of my watch point to the hour of twelve. Yet I cannot go to sleep before writing to you, for I think you must be wondering why you do not hear from me. It is nearly a week since I entered on my post, and I have been very busy in many ways. I think I shall like it : the hours are not over long, and the boys not too unruly, as boys go. I have found rooms to suit me next door to your home, with the little widow, Phœby Crump ; she is a good old soul, and does her best to make me comfortable. In compliance with your wish, I have not

suffered a hint to escape me that you and I are all-in-all to each other ; and I quite agree with you, though I did not at first, that it may be better to let the explanation rest until you come home. Your good dear father and mother, quite of the old school, would take fright at once at anyone's having laid siege to the heart of their little Edna, whom they look upon as only an inexperienced school-girl. I will try to win my way into their hearts first, as you suggested ; or they may say that a third master in the Ebley Grammar School is no proper suitor for their Edna. Your home is very pleasant—your parents what I had hoped them to be—and your sister is a sweet, noble girl, whom I shall be proud to call sister. But oh, my love, all is incomplete without *you*. I think of you morning, noon, and night, and I never weary of hearing your parents talk of their darling Edna.

“Ever your own,

“RANDOLPH.”

And yet, writing that letter, Mr. Cross could entertain the project of awakening the echoes of the other sister's heart ! To do him justice, he had no insuperably bad motive in his head, neither did he intend to wound too greatly the heart of Azubah : it was simply to amuse himself, *pour faire passer le temps*.

From three to four months had elapsed since then, and his object was attained. Ay, and a great deal more than his object, for Azubah loved him with all the depth of her ardent nature. He had not quite intended *that*. And yet it was gratifying to him, for his own wings had been somewhat singed in the process. He was essentially of a shallow, butterfly nature ; and though, in one sense, he was still true to Edna, still loved her, he would not have been unhappy had destiny told him he must take Azubah for his wife.

As he stood at the window this April day, handing in the buttercups, and saw the flush upon her soft cheek and the tremulous drooping of her long-lashed lids when he repeated the last line of the song, proving how deeply she loved him, his pulses stirred with a feeling that was more than triumph.

“Azubah, Azubah,” he cried, in an accent of tenderness, “I like to linger over your name.”

“I cannot imagine how they could have given it to me,” she returned.

“Do you know what the name signifies ?”

Azubah shook her head, laughing. “Not unless it signifies ‘old maid,’” she responded. “Some one once told me it did.”

Mr. Randolph Cross, still leaning over the window so that his hair nearly touched hers, smiled.

“But it really has a signification ; as all names have in *some* language. Azubah is Hebrew, and means ‘deserted.’”

“Deserted !”

“Yes. Be careful that it does not bring you misfortune.”

Azubah glanced up at him with mirthful eyes. "You are superstitious, are you, Mr. Cross?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I believe I am. I do not like these names that bear gloomy significations. I cannot understand why my parents gave me the savage name they did. Randal—it means 'wolf,' you know. Just think of it! And there were so many other names that I might have had, even beginning with 'R,'" he added, half laughing. "Reginald—strong. Robert—famous; and oh! a host of others with good meanings. But Randal!"

"Why do you call yourself Randal?" asked Azubah, laughing at him.

"Because my name is Randal—and it signifies 'wolf,'" he rejoined. "I hate it, so I changed it to Randolph."

Even as he spoke, a momentary thought crossed Azubah that it was not quite *true* to do this. It passed, and she spoke impulsively.

"I like both the names: and I think, of the two, I like Randal best:" and somehow a great wave of colour swept over her cheek and brow lest she had said too much. "But I did not know that Randal was a Christian name," she went on quietly.

"Neither is it; only they gave it to me as one. My father's old friend, John Randal, was my godfather, and they must needs name me Randal after him. As if they could not have made it John! By the way, talking of *John*," resumed Mr. Cross in a colder tone, "who and what is that young fellow that came in to supper with you last night? You all called him John—just as though he belonged to the house. I'm sure he seemed familiar enough with it."

"Last night? Oh, that was John Emmons. He was articled to my father before going up to walk the hospitals, and has now been for six months in Paris and in Germany."

"Has he come back to stay?"

"Certainly. I expect—I am not quite sure, but I expect he will join my father. Papa wishes it, and I think John does. What with the new houses springing up at the other end of Ebley, beyond the schools, you know, the practice is getting more than papa cares to attend to: he is not as young as he was."

"Rather an impudent fellow, this Emmons, is he not?"

Azubah smiled. "We have never found him so. Why?"

"We went out together last night, you remember: and the moon was so bright that we took a stroll over the downs yonder. Before your gate was well closed the man began about your sister Edna—putting all sorts of questions to me. Did I see much of her in London—and was she happy—and did she look well—and had she grown—and a hundred others. Like his impudence!"

Azubah laughed outright now. "He has a right to ask them," she said; "at least, I fancy he thinks he has. He and Edna used to be the greatest friends. But for her youth they would have been engaged then. John wanted it, but papa said they must wait."

Mr. Cross's face was like a thunder cloud. "You do not mean to tell me there was any *love* between them, Miss Shelton!"

"On John's part there certainly was; he worshipped the very ground she trod upon. And Edna, I fancied, liked him; but she is the veriest little coquette you ever saw."

"Amused herself at his expense, no doubt."

"Possibly so. I hope she will not do it when she is old enough to know better. John Emmons is a noble-natured man and deserves good treatment. Here's papa! And now we must go in to tea."

Mr. Shelton was a slight, grey-haired man, with a stoop in the shoulders that told he was not as strong in frame as he had once been. He and Randolph came in together, and they all passed into the tea room.

"Mother," said Azubah, as they took their seats at the plentifully-spread table, "Mr. Cross has been talking of the meaning attached to Christian names: and mine, he says, signifies 'deserted.'"

"Oh, indeed," cried the old lady, scanning Mr. Cross through her spectacles with her keen brown eyes. She was dressed in the plainest of fashions, a muslin kerchief crossed on her neck after the manner of a Quakeress, and a good substantial apron tied on over her brown stuff gown. "I don't suppose its meaning will make much difference to you, Azubah. You are not one, I take it, likely to be deserted in reality."

Azubah laughed. "I daresay not. But, what with the name in itself, *and* its meaning, I wish you had given me a better one, mamma."

"What ails the name, child?"

"It is so quaint—so old—so uncommon."

"It is a good name, as all Bible names are. Mr. Cross knows who bore it before you, I reckon."

Mr. Cross slightly bowed. The probability was that it was fresh news to him.

"And his name is really Randal, not Randolph," resumed Azubah.

"And Randal, he says, signifies 'wolf.'"

"Wolf, eh!" said the doctor, in a jesting tone, as he looked up from his plate at the young man. "Well, I conclude you are a good sort of wolf, not a bad one. Not of that species that devour little Red Riding Hoods?"

"No," laughed Randolph. "That wolf was my ancient ancestor, I imagine; we, his descendants, have had the advantage of society since then, and have become polished. I admire Red Riding Hoods immensely, but I should not like to eat them."

"I wonder what people will get up next!" cried Mrs. Shelton, as her mittened hands dispensed her cups of fragrant tea. "One name meaning a wolf, and the other 'deserted'! I'd have fixed on something pleasanter for 'em while I was about it."

It was a delightful evening, a glorious sunset. Azubah, toying

with the buttercups, looked at its golden radiance, flooding the west, with a longing eye ; and Mr. Cross, seeing it, asked her to go out with him and see the spot where the buttercups grew.

"Go if you like, child," said her mother : "you have not been out to-day." So Azubah put on her things, and she and Mr. Cross went down the road side by side. The old doctor watched them from the front window. What a handsome couple they looked !

"A fine young man !" he remarked to his wife ; "and he is a fine scholar. Is there anything between them, do you think, Patty ? Are they beginning to think of one another ?"

"I should say not," decisively replied Mrs. Shelton. "Anyway, not if Azubah is of my mind. I don't like him."

"Not like him !"

"Well, no, I don't, Robert. He's just as shallow as he can be, for all his grand scholarship. Azubah might look a bit higher, too, than just a school usher."

"I'm afraid young people are not in a hurry to take that into consideration, once a liking sets in. Azubah likes him, I am pretty sure. Whose company has she ever cared for before as she cares for his ?"

"Well, I've thought that, too."

"Time will show. And he'll get on, Patty, never fear ; he'll get on. A pushing young fellow, with his attainments, won't let his talents be hid under a bushel. Time will show."

Meanwhile Mr. Cross and Azubah were slowly pacing the meadow where grew the buttercups, under the light of the departing sun. Other flowers were springing up, the hedges were bursting into bud and bloom, the birds sang their evening song. How delightful it all was ! What joy it spoke of to at least one heart. And that evening walk was but the precursor to many others.

Ah, those blessed spring days ! how swiftly and smoothly they sped along. Those mellow May afternoons when Azubah sat watching for the one loved form, who never failed to come in sight and to linger with her in converse at the open window ; those golden evenings, when they strolled forth together—how like a fairy tale they seemed to Azubah, dreaming her first dream of love !

"Only three weeks longer," Azubah exclaimed to Randolph one evening, when they stood together in the doctor's little orchard, looking up at the promise of fruit. "Only three weeks to wait now."

"To wait for what ?"

"Until Edna comes home."

Mr. Cross, knitting his brow as though something in the words stung him, turned away with an impatient gesture.

"And then good-bye to all these delicious rambles, to the delightful hours we have spent together !" he cried to Azubah. "You will forget that I am in existence when that wonderful sister comes back to you ; and I—I shall have to forget you, I suppose."

Azubah looked at him reproachfully. "What injustice!" she exclaimed. "Shall I have no time for my friends because Edna is at home?"

"Perhaps you will not care to be with me then."

"You know I shall," she impulsively said; and then blushed violently at the admission.

"You do like me a little, then, Azubah?"

"Y—es."

Mr. Cross let go the branch of the tree he had been pulling at, and slipped one hand round her waist.

"Say *love* instead of *like*," he whispered; "for I *love* you, Azubah, my queen!"

She did not speak, and he lifted up her face and looked into her eyes with a burning gaze.

"Can you not say it? Just once!"

She glanced up at him in silence. She *could* have said, "Yes, I love you, Randal, with all my heart, and soul, and strength; love you as I never believed it possible for mortal to love; love you with a love that in death itself could not perish." Perhaps he read this in her silence, in the snow-white pallor that overspread her face, and was succeeded by a bright rose-red. Anyway, a sudden qualm of conscience smote him, his coward heart quailed within him, and he trembled at the thing he had done; and pressing one long kiss upon her lips, he drew her hand within his arm, and led her back to the house without another word. But Azubah was too happy to note the change in his face and manner, too blind in the fulness of her great joy to see any flaw in her golden idol. "He loves me, he loves me," she whispered to herself as she sank away into blissful dreams that night. And at the very self-same moment that she fell into them, Mr. Cross was in his own room writing to Edna.

"You ask me, Edna, whether I am impatient for the time to pass. Yes. I wish it wanted three days only instead of three weeks to the hour of your return. Time has fallen into a bad habit of lagging, and the days seem endless."

Nevertheless, as Randolph Cross folded this precious letter, he frowned a little at the complication he had brought on. What had he promised himself? In truth, he hardly knew. He had begun the thing for amusement, and continued it from liking. But for Edna he would have been well content with her sister.

"I wish I had not gone so far," he muttered. "Azubah is fearfully in earnest; I see that; and, I must say, I have given her pretty good cause to think I am not trifling. But I will be as cool as possible from this time; and—I wonder how it will end?"

He was true to his word; he sang no love songs, he whispered no pretty meaning compliments in Azubah's ears during the next few days. Somehow he could not tear himself away quite from Mrs. Shelton's; his feet took him there whether he would or not. Azubah

wondered what had come to him, why he seemed always so pre-occupied; but loving him fully, she trusted him fully, and never a doubt of his sincerity and truth crossed her mind."

"You are working too hard," she said to him one evening, when they chanced to be alone. "Or is it that you are in any trouble?"

Randal Cross looked at the concern in her sweet face, and the old habit was so strong upon him, and the evil spirit in his bosom was so active, that he could not keep the soft, persuasive, meaning look out of his eyes, or the lingering, tender cadence from his voice, as he answered her.

"Would it grieve you if I were, Azubah?"

"Yes, it would."

"My darling!"

Her pulses thrilled within her at the tenderly-breathed whisper. The world was bright again.

And so the days passed on in golden splendour, seeming to Azubah as if they flew by on angel's wings. And then came the day that was to bring Edna.

And it chanced that just at the hour the train was expected in, six o'clock in the evening, the doctor was forced to be with a patient. Unsuspicious Mrs. Shelton—unsuspicious as regarded Edna—asked Mr. Cross if he would be so kind as to meet her at the station. It was just what Mr. Cross would, and he went off with alacrity.

Twenty minutes later, Mrs. Shelton and Azubah were at the front door, clasping a young girl in their arms; a smart little thing that seemed all silks and ribbons.

"Dear mother! dear Azubah! I am so glad to see you again," cried the chirruping little voice, as Miss Edna kissed first one and then the other. "Where is papa?"

"Here he is!" cried the old doctor; "just got in, my pet." And he too clasped and kissed her.

And then they all passed into the house, chatting together at one time, after the manner of people who have been long apart from each other.

Randal Cross watched the meeting, his dark eyes glancing on Edna's glowing face with renewed love and admiration. She was a pretty little creature, petite and dainty, from head to foot. Her glossy black hair curled in short rings around her face, her saucy eyes sparkled with animation, and her olive complexion glowed with a bright colour in cheeks and lips.

A sweet, affectionate, merry, light-hearted chatterbox of a girl, wholly unlike her queenly sister; but extremely pretty in her way. Edna was the pet and darling of the household, you could see that at a glance. The best chair in the house, the daintiest food, the finest clothing, were all for Edna; and Azubah looked upon her with eyes of pride and devotion.

A merry evening passed. Randal Cross, who had been invited

to remain, seemed endowed with some sudden inspiration ; his flow of spirits was exhaustless—and his wit and humour kept them in a constant peal of laughter.

“How do you like Mr. Cross?” Azubah asked her sister later. And Edna smiled slyly at the question, but did not answer.

“You saw him sometimes in London, Edna?”

“I saw him a great deal, Azubah.—What will she say when she comes to know all?” thought Edna.

“But only in class?”

“Oh, yes I did. I visited at the Watsons’, you know, and so did he.”

“Do you like him?”

“Yes,” laughed Edna. But Azubah did not see why she laughed.

The next day dawned and went on to the evening. Azubah had been reading in the rustic arbour near the orchard. But it grew too dark to see. Her book had dropped in her lap, and her large grey eyes were full of dreams, as she sat with head upon her hand, watching the twilight shadows creep over the lawn.

Suddenly she heard footsteps approach and the light was darkened. Edna and Mr. Cross stood before her, hand in hand.

“Dear sister,” Edna said, softly, “we have come to beg your pardon for our deception, and to ask your blessing. Oh, Azubah, don’t you see—don’t you know, that Randal and I love each other? We have cared for one another all this year—and he has been hoping to win your hearts here—that you should not object to our union—for the foolish fellow thought because he was not a millionaire he was not worthy of me. But I knew you could not help loving him, all and each of you, if once you knew him. And it has all come about as we hoped—and we want you to intercede with papa and mamma, Azubah—that they may wish us God speed.”

Azubah sat like one turned into stone. A strange buzz sounded in her ears ; the shadows seemed to be dancing.

“Why don’t you speak, Azubah?” cried the petted girl impatiently. “You must like Randolph!”

Azubah shook off her faintness with an effort. She lifted up her head and fixed her grey eyes—almost black with the intensity of her emotion—upon the man’s cowering face. Her own face was whiter than marble, even to the lips, and Edna looked from one face to another in speechless amazement.

“Azubah, what is it?—what is the matter?” and the girl felt a sudden terror. “Why do you say nothing?”

Still Azubah did not speak. She only kept that stern, set gaze upon the cowardly face of Randal Cross ; then, rising impulsively, she ran into the house and up to her room. It was getting rather a worse moment than Mr. Cross had bargained for.

“Do not go, do not follow her!” he said hoarsely, striving to detain Edna : but she wrenched her hand from his grasp and sped

away. Down by her own little white cot knelt Azubah, her face buried in her hands.

"Oh, Azubah, my dear sister, tell me what it all means!" Edna cried in distress, encircling the kneeling figure with her arms: and she began to tremble violently. Azubah, praying inwardly for help, strove to collect herself.

"It is nothing, my little sister, but my own foolishness: I have been a very silly girl, that is all: and I—I felt a little faint just now. Go down to your lover, Edna, and tell him I give you both my blessing, and—to-morrow—I will break it to mamma."

"But you are ill, Azubah."

"No, dear; weak and nervous to-night only. Please go down and let me be alone a little while." And kissing her fondly on cheek and brow, Azubah pointed to the door.

And as the door closed upon her sister, and she found herself alone again, she sank down upon the floor, moaning feebly, "Deserted, deserted! Oh, Father in heaven, forgive him and help her, and be merciful to me!"

She was very pale when, next morning, she joined the family circle; a soft light sat in her eyes, a cheerful smile rested upon her lips. And of the five who were gathered about the breakfast-table she seemed the most happy and care-free: for it was a grave-faced group, and a dark shadow seemed hovering over all.

For Mr. Cross had come in to breakfast: Edna had bidden him to it the night before in the presence of her father and mother; and then, after his departure, she had taken courage and confessed. Some hasty words spoken by Mr. Cross in the shock of the moment had opened Edna's eyes.

However, Mr. Cross sat down to breakfast with them, nothing being said. It was a cold, constrained meal: and when he rose from table to go to the school, Edna followed him out.

As he took down his hat from the hall rack he spoke to Edna in a low tone: some words of love. She compressed her lips and answered them.

Never again, so long as they both lived, she said, must he dare so to speak to her. She knew him now, knew him for what he was, the false coward who could dare to trifle with them both—herself and Azubah. And she wished him good-bye for ever.

"Father, mother," she said, going back to the breakfast-room, when Randal Cross left her, with misery in his eyes, and a blue pallor on his lips, "I told you all last evening of my betrothal to this man, Randal Cross, and asked forgiveness for my deception, and your consent to our union. I have since learned the utter unworthiness of my idol, his lack of honour and the baseness of his whole nature. I have given him his freedom; he will leave our doors, never to darken them again. Let us think of him as one dead, and never speak of him more."

And they never did. Poor, tender-hearted, brave little Edna wept over her broken idol and grieved for him in secret, as girls always do grieve over such things. And then, after a time, that noble-hearted, handsome young fellow, her father's partner, crept into her heart again, and made the sunshine of her life. This was her truest and best love; her liking for that other man had been but a school-girl's fancy.

And Mr. Cross? They did not see him again. The school was breaking up, and he left Ebley. Before it met again, he had had the grace to resign his appointment, and to take a post at a distance.

What *could* he have expected would have come of it? Unless, indeed, he had reckoned on the generosity of that noble girl's nature, Azubah, to bury the past in silence and give him up quietly to Edna. He had loved Edna, with all the force of his shallow nature, and he often bit his lip with sharp pain and cursed his bitter folly, and strove to forget the disgrace that must attach to him for ever.

But he had effectually blighted one life. Azubah never forgot him; never could bring herself to listen to another. Her happiness had gone out with Randal Cross.

Years after, when the white threads were beginning to show in her hair, she read a name in the list of "Deaths" in a north-country paper, that drove the blood from cheek and lip, and set the old pain tugging at her heart. The death of Randal Cross. And all night long, Azubah sobbed upon her pillow, mourning and grieving over the dead idol of her youth. Many days did she give to this mourning, seeking not to be comforted, save by One who can comfort all.

And then she took up the broken thread of her calm and uneventful life again, none knowing of the grave that lay in her heart; striving all the more anxiously to fulfil to the uttermost every duty, both to God and man, that fell to her lot in this world of change.





THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER. XXXIV.

EMILY'S INHERITANCE.

A CARRIAGE drove up to the door of a house in Devonshire Street, let in sets of apartments ; and an elderly lady, with a face of anxious benevolence, inquired of the servant who answered the bell, how Miss Medlicott had passed the night ; and how she seemed that afternoon ? What the answer might have been in the Palace of Truth, Queen Altémire may know, though we do not ; but the maid being perfect in her lesson, replied with correct inflection of voice that Miss Medlicott had slept a little, and was but “ middling, ma'am, thank you, if you would be pleased to walk up ”—an invitation that kind Mrs. Bourne could never resist, however inconvenient compliance might be. She really was in a hurry, having to call for her husband at his club ; and she had seen her friend several times lately ; but the fear of her feeling slighted, if the basket of delicacies were only sent up by the servant, made her risk ill consequences and climb to the second-floor, where the afflicted lady resided at present—sorely against her will.

By dint of a dumb, deaf, and dogged perseverance, Mr. Bourne had carried his point, and prevented Miss Medlicott from making an asylum of his hospitable hearth. He bore with her sufferings with patience till he could bear no longer ; and when he at last saw her and her boxes depart, he secretly vowed that over his threshold no luggage of hers should ever be carried again. His good wife might pet her outside his walls as much as she pleased, but not within them, and pay the doctor, Mowatt's, long bills for his attendance on her.

The years that had passed over Mowatt's head had changed him, in outward appearance, considerably for the better. He was now a very popular practitioner, more popular than many physicians. He did all man could do to secure a respectable position ; the liberal advances of the friends who had helped him to begin afresh, were punctually repaid to the last farthing of interest ; all his old debts were hunted up and discharged ; and any former enemies he believed to exist were disarmed, or won over, by unexpected courtesies or substantial service. He kept up a respectful, grateful intercourse with Sir Marcus Combermere and Archdeacon Burleigh ; never taking offence at any of their opinions, even when the one questioned his science and the other his morality.

The weather had changed for the worse, and the amusements of the vacation party in their Kentish village had been considerably curtailed, to the possible advantage of their studies. Indeed, Pembroke Tracy announced that he was beginning to know too much : his head would soon be as full as his carpet bag, which required three hands and a leg to make it shut. One day he chanced to say something about the "spirits."

"You believe in spirits, then?" exclaimed Emily, dropping her voice to a whisper. He was startled, both by her change of manner and of countenance.

"No, I don't mean that I do ; I laughed when they told me ; but lots of people *do*, you know, and pay money to see what they do—lifting a fellow out of his chair, and playing the fiddle without hands, and that sort of thing."

"I know," she said with a shiver. "But, do you know anyone who has been made very unhappy by them?"

"No, indeed, Miss Stormount. Do you?"

She put her hands before her eyes for a moment ; then rose from her seat, and walked out of the room, leaving Tracy disconcerted and frightened. The next day, the proposed expedition to the sea-side was carried out, Sir Marcus alone of both parties remaining behind. The lads were promised a boat, and a ruin to scramble over ; and the pic-nic was to be held in the grounds of the latter, which was all Emily's property.

It appeared from the account given by the agent, who met them by appointment, that old Mr. Darlington had bought the land and tenements which they had come to see, at a time when prices were much depressed, and had let them out on long leases, some of which were nearly expired. The whole was capable of great improvement ; and the town wanted to make a bathing cove at the foot of the ruin, which commanded a small natural harbour. The ruin itself consisted only of a few walls, and had the reputation of having been a hiding-place for smugglers in its day. Miss Granard took the young heiress into the old office, of which Mr. Irvine, the agent, kept the key.

"Do you know what place this used to be, Emily?" asked Adela.

"Was it not Mr. Darlington's office? You said so."

"Yes; but I did not explain the use to which he put it. You heard what Mr. Irvine said about those boxes. I am afraid the firm by which your relation was employed dealt principally with smugglers, and the money which bought all this property was made in the same trade."

"I am sorry for that," said Emily: "it was dishonest. Perhaps that is the reason it brought so much trouble with it. Could it have been that which made my mother so unhappy?"

"She had other reasons, which you will readily understand, if you remember what you have heard more than once—the story Mrs. Raymond told us, of her escape from France and coming to England as a child. You remember it, Emily?" for the large eyes were clouding over with a look of perplexity and pain.

"Remember it? I should think I did. I have so often wished I knew what became of her faithful servant. Do you mean that *this* was the place she remembers so well?"

"We have every reason to believe it, dear."

"And Mr. Darlington was the gentleman she saw—who was so kind to her?"

"Yes, Emily. But that is not all. When he was dying, a wealthy old man, he wrote a letter to your grandfather, confessing that he had used the treasure deposited in his hands, and made his fortune by it."

There was a short silence, while Emily was pondering over what she had heard. A sigh escaped her. "How wicked!"

"He is gone, dear; and he left it to your grandfather to repair the wrong, if possible." Adela then briefly related what we already know, and again there was silence. Emily stood leaning against the old worm-eaten desk, with a slightly-knitted brow.

"Why did Paul steal those papers?" was her first question. "Did he not wish me to know the truth?"

"We cannot tell, dear; Paul's whole behaviour was mysterious. I, for one, am inclined to believe that when you are of age we shall see him again and know more."

"The fortune was all made out of Mrs. Raymond's money—it is hers, then. We must not spend a farthing."

"You have not spent a farthing since I knew it. The value of this property, in which Mr. Darlington invested his own savings, has been sufficient for all your expenses."

"And yours—and all your trouble in my education—the hours you have spent in teaching as well as nursing me—is none of that to be reckoned?"

"What I did for you, my darling, was freely done. I would have spared you all this, if I could."

"And Mr. Archdale—does *he* know?"

"Yes; I was obliged to take him, with your other trusty friends, into my confidence. He has approved of all I have done."

"I see!" said Emily, a glow passing over her cheeks, "but my turn is coming now, and you cannot prevent me. What is restored to Mrs. Raymond will go to him and his mother; and you will all be comfortable and happy. I wish I could make myself one-and-twenty directly!"

After dinner, Adela sat down to sketch the ruins. Lewis and Kate, after a little pretence at watching her, strolled away, they did not exactly know where—into a region of their own, most likely, where time and space were not. The lads were gone for a sail. Emily went to explore the remains of the building; she wanted to see the place where the smugglers used to land, Pembroke attending her. And after some scrambling among fallen bricks and overgrown brushwood, they made out to their satisfaction that a certain slope of the shore, close to a hollow in the rock, must have been the scene of some of those forbidden ventures which form the romance of trade.

"It must have been rather good fun in those days, dodging custom-house officers and running a cargo in under their very noses," said Tracy. "Is there nothing you want among those rocks? I think I see something after your own heart. You shall have it directly."

He kept his word, and after scrambling and slipping to a wild degree, brought to land some fine specimens of the wonders of the shore, which now only wanted something to carry them in. Neither had even a basket, and Emily pronounced that sea-water was indispensable; so her gallant cavalier set off in quest of a basin or jar, at the nearest available habitation. He said he should not be three minutes, but it was a longer errand than he expected; and meanwhile she wandered along the beach, under the steep cliffs, and forgot him and all her favourite studies in the absorbing subject of the day's revelations.

"It is for this I have been preserved, rescued, shown what is the true wealth of the soul and the mind!" she thought; "now I see why the Archdeacon told me to be just before I was generous, and to work if I wished to give. I know now what my poor mother meant—it was her work, and she could not do it—she left it to me; and it cost her dear enough to do that. Yes, he could rob her of her income, and make her life miserable; but not of her firm purpose to have the wrong set right after her death. Thank God for that."

"*Emily!*" said a voice.

It was so soft, sweet, and plaintive, that at the first moment she was less startled than surprised. She stood still a moment, and looked around. The water had worn a natural archway in the cliff, through which the whole curving line of the coast, with its headlands, and beach, and the delicate white of the breakers, was distinctly

visible, as if in a frame. One side of the arch jutted forward, and with a momentary suspicion that the sound had come from behind it, she made a step in that direction—checked the next instant by its being repeated—this time behind her, though when she turned her head, there was no one to be seen. A tremor passed through her frame; she could hardly bring out the words, “Does anyone call me?”

“My child—my beloved Emily!” said the voice again; and now she recognised the tone; it was her mother’s. She was either dreaming, or something terrible was befalling her; for the old sensation of deadly fear, which she had almost forgotten, was checking the circulation of her blood, so as to make her feel sick and faint. “My God! forsake me not!” was her unspoken prayer. It helped to sustain her courage and enable her to stand erect, grasping a corner of the rock beside her for support; and she found voice to say that if anyone were trying to impose upon her fears, he would find it lost labour.

“I impose on your fears, Emily!” returned the plaintive voice. “I, who loved you so in life, and have never ceased to watch over you, unseen? Child of my affections, it is permitted me this once to speak, and to you it is given to hear—you, who possess the rare gift of perceiving the presence of the invisible. Interrupt me not—the time is short, and I have a solemn charge to give you.”

“No, no!” cried the young girl, struggling to command her nerves, “I cannot bear this—it is too cruel. Show yourself, whoever you are—or if you will not, I will find and expose you! I am no longer the frightened child who was the sport of a cruel man; God’s protection is around me, and I will not fear!”

She darted round the mass of rock whence the voice had appeared to come; she searched wildly, right and left—in the arch, behind the jutting butment—all in vain; and as she paused, breathless and bewildered, the pitying accents rose again, with the words, “Poor child! will you listen now?”

“Oh, I have no choice—say what you like,” panted Emily, sinking down on a stone, and holding her hand to her heart. “I must bear it, whatever it is.”

“Emily, I forgive your doubts, for you have been taught to disbelieve; but is it then so strange to you that your mother should love you still? Have you ceased to love her, that you will not listen to her voice?—nor do her bidding!”

The poor girl clasped her hands, and bowed her head. Was it possible that such things could be? And if so, durst she contend against such an appeal? Her silence was, perhaps, accepted as submission; for the voice spoke again, more solemnly than before.

“Emily, there is one who has loved you from your childhood—has watched over you unseen—has served you when you were told he was doing you wrong—has been exiled and injured on your

account—struggling with difficulties, slandered, misrepresented, misunderstood—but still devoted to your happiness. Do you know of whom I speak?”

“Yes, yes,” gasped the orphan, “I do—I do.” She thought it was Paul who was spoken of, and felt as if all must be a dream.

“Then, as you value your mother’s last wishes, when the right moment comes let him meet with his reward. Emily, my own child, farewell! farewell!”

The last words died faintly away, as if the speaker were retreating; and Emily felt she was alone; the blood was galloping through every vein, her head seemed ready to burst. She remained on the stone upon which she sunk until roused by Pembroke’s scrambling down the rocks, hugging a huge earthenware basin in his arms.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PEMBROKE’S QUEST.

“HERE you are, Miss Stormount! I am so sorry to have kept you waiting. I could find nobody to lend me anything, and had to steal this at last, full of the family wash—which will have to be done over again, I am afraid, as I left it all on the kitchen floor. It is not the first trick that has been played in these parts, neither will it be the last, I’ll be bound.”

“You saw no one—did you hear nothing?” asked Emily, drawing a long breath.

“I thought I heard your voice once, but I was not sure. Is this large enough? It will hold a lot.”

“More than we can take home, Mr. Tracy,” said she, collecting herself with an effort. “I am sorry you have had so much trouble for my fancies.”

“Sorry! Don’t you know that I like nothing better than running about to please you? I wish you would set me to something more difficult.”

“If I thought you were in earnest, I might.”

“How is a fellow to show he is in earnest, if hauling such a piece of crockery down these rocks (at the risk of being taken up for a thief) is not enough?”

“It is a great proof of your goodwill to science, I admit.”

“Oh, you think so! Do you really believe that it is only for their own sakes I have been worshipping beetles like an old Egyptian, and going up to my knees in salt water after jelly fish? Don’t you know that it would have been just the same if you had gone in for nursing or cookery—that I should have learned whatever you taught me, whether to make a compress or a pie? It is no use trying to pretend any longer; it is your teaching that I care for, and so long as I have that, I would as soon learn one thing as another.”

"Let us fill the basin, then," she said, quietly, without any vestiges of the excitement she had gone through. The semi-declaration of honest Pem did not seem to startle or confuse her; she looked at him kindly, but as if he were years younger than herself, and might, therefore, say what he pleased.

"If you really wished to do something hard to please me, and it were right that you should, I could find you work; but I could not teach you how it was to be done."

"Never mind *that*, Miss Stormount! If man can do it, man can find out how," said Pembroke, theatrically.

"Could you find a boy that we have lost sight of for seven years, but who, I *know*, is alive still, and whom I am resolved to see, and reward for his kindness to me when I was a child? If you could, Mr. Tracy, there is nothing you might ask me in return that I should like to refuse you."

"Done, Miss Stormount! If he is above ground, I'll find him. Tell me something more—where he was seen last, and so forth; I'll get it all ship-shape and set off to-morrow. I can't say more than that, when it costs me your company."

"You would not regret that if you were with me long; I am not quite like other people; I see and hear what they cannot, and then they do not believe that I can; and sometimes I am deceived myself, by those who know how to do it. It is a long time since I thought I heard anything—— But I won't talk of myself; I want to make you understand about Paul Rocket."

She gave a brief sketch of the history we know already, and told how Paul had been in their neighbourhood at Grasmere, and was suspected of having taken important papers entrusted by her mother to Mr. Mowatt.

"If he took them, I am sure he had some reason for it, and I have been left quiet ever since. I want him found, that he may clear himself, and know that I never suspected him of meaning to do harm; and if he can tell me where those papers are, it will be a great kindness; I can hardly do my duty without them."

"The papers shall be found, Miss Stormount; trust me. But to come to business—is there any clue one could follow in tracing him? What was he doing at Grasmere?"

"He was disguised, so that nobody recognised him, and he had charge of a horse called Cairngorm, that two of Mr. Lazarus's men had to sell."

"Cairngorm! Why that was the horse there was a story about. If he was with Lazarus's men, Lazarus may know where to find him; and I am proud to say I know where to find Lazarus; so you may rely on hearing something soon. There! I hear Frankland calling us. Don't be afraid for your pets; I'll carry them, water and all; and if Paul Rocket won't come of his own accord, I'll carry him too."

Adela Granard saw her ward return with the boys, in fits of

laughter, contending who should carry the big basin, and asking her a dozen questions in a breath about the contents. The basin itself was rather a difficulty, and it was at last decided that the treasures must be transferred to the now empty pie-dishes, and that Tracy, having been the original borrower, should go and restore the property with due compensation. The rest of the party meanwhile returned to the inn where they had put up their conveyance, a roomy waggonette that just held them all.

On arriving thither, to Adela's surprise, she was greeted by name, and found Mowatt standing before her, with an extended hand, into which she could not but place her own, though the presence of this man, notwithstanding all his services, generally gave her an undefined sense of uneasiness.

"I saw Sir Marcus at your quarters, and got his leave to follow you," he said, as he turned to shake hands with Emily, "but there was no conveyance to be had, and the walk was rather a long one. You have had a splendid day for your pic-nic."

He met Miss Granard's eye as he said this; and she saw he was aware of what she had explained to Emily. The conversation turned on the weather, the country, and the curiosities, till he had an opportunity of a word with her alone. Then his manner changed to one of professional authority.

"How did she bear it?"

"Wonderfully. She seems glad to be called upon for the sacrifice. I have never seen her in brighter spirits."

"Have you felt her hand, by chance?"

"No," said Adela, startled.

"Then I have, and the sooner she is quiet the better. Have you noticed her eyes?"

"I thought they looked more animated than usual."

"They were never meant to glow as they do now. Her brain is working double-tides, and unless she is carefully and judiciously watched, I will not answer for the consequences. Do not say a word to her, or anyone, but go home as fast as you can. I will give your young companions a hint not to be noisy."

"You will come back with us, Mr. Mowatt?"

"If you can find me a place, certainly."

To find it for the doctor in the crowded waggonette might have been a difficulty, had not Tracy come up while they were discussing the matter, and announced his resolution to walk. He had met with a friend, and they should be there nearly as soon as the rest.

"Rather an unusual exertion on your part, Tracy!" said Lewis.

"Perhaps so," was that young gentleman's dignified reply, "but more unusual things than that may happen yet, dominie. For instance, if you'll lend me a sovereign, you shall have it back, and that is more than I would say to everybody. You did as much for cousin Cecilia once upon a time."

The master and the public practitioner exchanged a glance; and Lewis, without replying, though his colour had risen, handed a gold coin to his pupil, who nodded his thanks, and disappeared. Mowatt looked after him with a knitted brow, and asked if that were Mrs. Palmer's cousin.

"Yes, and a poor account he gives of Mrs. Palmer's happiness," said Lewis, as he secured the cords of the hamper. "She was intended for a better fate."

"Well, at the rate her husband is going on now, he will soon set her free, one way or another. It was she who gave me the warning that brought me down to-day. I should have come sooner, if I could have found a colleague to take my patients for me."

The boys found Emily too tired for conversation, and devoted themselves to nursing the pie-dishes, carefully secured in napkins and pocket-handkerchiefs. Before the drive was ended, Emily flagged more and more, and was the first to propose that she should go to her room at once. But Adela was surprised when she expressed a wish to see Mr. Mowatt alone.

"I have something to ask him," was the only explanation she would give, and Adela was unwilling to press or oppose her. Mowatt obeyed the summons with alacrity, and remained with her for half-an-hour, at the end of which he returned to his expectant friends with a marked increase of gravity. The case was one requiring the utmost care and watchfulness, and she must never be left unguarded. Whatever precautions had been taken in childhood must be redoubled now, only she must not be aware of them.

"Has she seen anyone?" asked Sir Marcus.

"I cannot discover that she has; but she is convinced that she heard her mother's spirit speaking to her; and she sent for me, as having been with her mother at the last. When I told her the departed were at rest, she said, 'Can they rest if their wishes are not fulfilled?' and then begged me to repeat all I could recollect of her last words. As you may suppose, I softened all I could, and I hope I have calmed her sufficiently to sleep; but I see the hand of Cosmo Dangerfield in this, and it is the old attack in a more subtle form."

"The sooner we move north the better," said Sir Marcus; "it is all owing to me that the child is here now. We'll go straight to Comber Court, Adela, my dear; and call in the Archdeacon to help us; for this symptom belongs more to his exertions than to mine."

A surprise was in store. On Lewis's appearance the next morning, he announced that Pembroke Tracy had started by the evening train, having fetched his goods in his tutor's absence, and left him a mysterious note by way of apology. There was a message of farewell generally, and an especial one to Miss Stormount—that he should do his best to execute his commission.

"What commission did you give Mr. Tracy, dear?" asked Adela. Emily's night had been feverish and restless, but she had risen with

the rest, to prepare for their journey. Without hesitation or embarrassment, she replied, "He wanted to do something hard to please me, so I asked him to find poor Paul Rocket."

"Why did you not tell me you wished Paul to be found?"

"I did not know how much I wished it till yesterday," was the answer: and that the desire had taken a strong hold of her brain, whatever might be the cause, was very evident.

When Pembroke Tracy reached the house whence he had abstracted the basin, he perceived a stout, good-natured looking woman talking and curtsying to some one wrapped in a cloak; and when he began his explanation, and proffered half-a-crown in payment of damages, a hand was stretched out from beneath the mantle and laid on his shoulder.

"Have the stars proved true or false, young man?" asked a voice he remembered well.

"Is it you, Professor Dangerfield? What are you doing here? Does Emily know you are so near?" asked Pembroke, recalling the hints given him about the cruelty of this stepfather.

"She never knows when I am near; I watch over her unseen," was the answer; "the sight of me would agitate her, so I refrain. Give this good woman her property, and come with me; I have more to tell you than you suppose."

Amazed but curious, Tracy complied, and followed Cosmo into the garden. The mistress of the house evidently knew him well, and was ready to do his bidding. When they were alone he turned to the young man and again laid his hand on his shoulder.

"You have seen her—you have learned to know her; was the prophecy only a dream?"

"I hope not, for I like her uncommonly. I'll win her if I can."

"And to win her, you are going on an errand?" said the other, with a smile.

"How do you know that?"

"I heard you tell her that the papers should be found; and I knew that meant that you would find them. But you never can, without my assistance. Come back to town with me, and I will consult those who see where we are blind, and to whom time and space are nothing. You look like a lad of spirit. Are you afraid?"

Pembroke indignantly refuted the imputation; he only thought others might laugh at him.

"Tell no one that I am here; it will excite my daughter's nerves, and they must be spared if possible. Say only you have met a friend and are going to walk with him. Have you money?"

"Not a rap. I gave that good woman my last half-crown."

"Then you had better provide yourself, for we must be in London to-night, and you may have to start sooner than you think."

"It is a start altogether, and a queer one," thought Pem, but the novelty was charming, and he did as he was told. They reached London about midnight, and Tracy, having his portmanteau with him, proposed taking a cab. To go where? asked the Professor. Why, to some hotel, of course, for supper and bed. Supper and bed he should have, but not in such quarters, and he must shoulder his portmanteau for once, as they must walk a little way, and did not want to be traced. Yielding to necessity, Pem exerted himself so far, his bodily strength being nearly equal to his laziness, and after following his guide among a number of dingy streets, found himself at last admitted by him, with a key he took out of his pocket, at the back door of a small shop. The passage was dark and close, but Cosmo speedily struck a match and lighted a candle placed in readiness. In answer to a low whistle, repeated three times, a slow step was heard ascending from the depths below, and an old white-haired woman, with a coloured handkerchief tied over her cap, came up, asking, in French, what monsieur would like to have.

Monsieur would like a bed for this gentleman, and whatever she could give him for supper on short notice. Then, as if judging it expedient to enlist her goodwill in the cause, he added, "We must make much of him, Justine, for he is going to look for Paul."

The old woman turned her dim eyes on the youth, holding up the candle in her hand to take a better view of his figure. Apparently it was not to her liking, for she gave an uncomplimentary grunt, and preceded them up the staircase to the second floor, where she opened the door of as uninviting a bedchamber as Pembroke had ever seen.

"There is a bed for the gentleman, and supper will come up in ten minutes," she said: "and if monsieur wants the card-table he must get it out himself."

She then retired, muttering what seemed to Pembroke's ear like unearthly denunciations, but was in fact only a Flemish comment on his size and strength.

"He might well say I might start sooner than I expected," grumbled the young Sybarite, as he eyed the dingy bed-clothes with disgust. "It is just as well, though, to have no inducement to go to sleep, for I shall have to keep wide awake: if he comes the card-sharper dodge I think I can show him a thing or two. We'll see."

Happily, perhaps, for both parties, this trial of skill was not required. The Professor was too well aware how slenderly his guest was provided, and had higher ends in view than to possess himself of the change left out of Lewis Frankland's sovereign. The meal served up by old Justine, though her slowness of movement kept them waiting longer than they liked, raised her considerably in Pembroke's estimation. At the close of the repast, she appeared with two cups of black coffee, which Cosmo observed was made on a receipt from the first restaurant in Paris. He set the

example of doing it justice, emptying one of the cups at a draught ; but as Pembroke was about to do the same, the old woman uttered a cry of warning.

"There is a fly in monsieur's cup—they are the pest of my life, these London flies—permit, monsieur !" And in her hurry she knocked the cup out of his hand. With many apologies, she picked up the broken china, wiped up the coffee with her apron, and shuffled away, as she said, to fetch some more. Before she returned, however, Tracy had leisure to notice a change in the manner of his host ; who, after showing some uneasiness, and then making an effort to talk, which ended in a thick stammer—gradually subsided into a stupid doze—a point scarcely reached when Justine re-appeared.

"What is the matter with him ?" asked Tracy, in the best French he could muster.

She nodded her head significantly. "You can leave him to sleep it off, and come to your room. No time to lose—your coffee is there, and a cab is waiting for you below. Be quick."

He followed her in amazement. Beginning to ask an explanation, she cut him short.

"You are going to look for Paul, he says. Is that true ?"

"Quite true, on my honour."

"To help the boy, or to harm him ?"

"To carry him the kindest message in the world. A young lady he served once cannot rest till she has seen him again."

"And because a young lady cannot rest he must be found ; but if a poor old drudge, who had grown to love him, has had no comfort night or day since he went, it doesn't matter. Well, if you want to serve the lady, you must keep clear of my master. It will be a bad day for both when they come together again. How do you mean to set about finding him ?

"My notion was to look up Lazarus, the horse-dealer's, men."

"Not a bad idea : but you will get nothing out of them without leave. Listen—I met a compatriote of mine a little while ago, whom I knew at Ostend ; one Amélie. She was *bonne* to an old doctor there, who kept a house full of birds and beasts, and she told me in confidence that Paul Rocket had been in their house, and helped her master to pack when he broke up his museum. If anyone knows where he went to, it will be Dr. Thaddeus."

"I have heard of him. But where is he to be found ?"

"If you will not betray Amélie, I'll tell you. You must go there," showing him a soiled card, with scarcely legible writing, "and ask for Mr. Benoni, and if they stare and pretend not to understand, say you have brought him something for the museum."

"All right. But look here—I have not money enough to start with. Before I go after Mr. Benoni, I must look up my own people for some cash."

"You must go nowhere, monsieur, but where I tell you, if you

would not have my master find you out. I have quieted him for a while, but I could not venture to make his dose too strong, and you have not a minute to lose. For money, hold,"—she dived into a large pocket, and brought up a greasy flannel bag. "These are my savings; I hoarded them for my poor boy; they may go in his service. Here are three hundred francs; they will carry you a long way, if you are careful. Tell him he would have had it all if he had not left his old friend. Take it, monsieur, take it—and go—you will find a light downstairs, and the cab."

"But suppose I am not let in at this hour, my good soul—it is just two o'clock," said Pembroke, reluctantly pocketing the bag.

"There is always a porter waiting there for the steamers that come in and bring horses over; and Amélie says her old master used to sit up half the night with his beasts at Ostend, so you may find him awake; if not, you must get the porter to let you stay till you can see him. Only get out of London as if it was on fire, for you will have an enemy at your heels in twenty-four hours. Stay—drink this cup of coffee first—nay, no fear for *you*," as Tracy hesitated; "if I could put anything in to give you double speed and strength, I would, though my life went with it."

The young man drank the coffee, and obeyed her urgent injunction to hasten out of the house. The cabman understood the address better than he did, and after some intricate wandering among the silent streets and lanes of the great sleeping city, stopped at a strong gate in a high black wall, near St. Katharine's Docks, where, as Justine had said, a porter was on duty all night. Pembroke's inquiry for Mr. Benoni brought an inquisitive pair of dark eyes, aided by a lantern, to survey him from head to foot; but he had been arranging his part as he came along, and assumed what he conceived would be the bearing of a student of natural history, caring nothing for sleep or rest in comparison with science. He had made a discovery which would be an event in the annals of knowledge; and to no one but the great man he sought would he make it known, unless, indeed, he were refused admittance now, in which case he must go off to the British Museum. The dark-eyed porter was quite aware what an offence this would be, were the old naturalist to hear of it; and his compliance being further quickened by a coin from Justine's bag, he at last agreed to admit the gentleman, and to see if Mr. Benoni's lights were still burning.

"He is often up all night, but that is no reason for his liking to be disturbed," added the official, as he preceded Tracy across a flagged court, and down one side of a quadrangle, where the great house of Lazarus stored away treasures untold, of every imaginable description, one part, as the porter told Pembroke, being devoted to horses. "We've been extra busy lately—great demand in Germany; we are buying up all we can lay hands on, and are expecting more from the East."

He rang a bell, despatched a message, and Pembroke was conducted up numerous flights of stairs, to a room strongly impregnated with pungent odours, of which tobacco was the most familiar and agreeable. A harsh voice emerging from a cloud demanded, with some attempt at courtesy, to what the honour of this visit was owing? "You have made a discovery, I hear. How can you tell if it be one or not?"

"I have made a very important discovery, Dr. Thaddeus," said Pembroke, hat in hand. "I have found the friend of Miss Stormount's childhood, of whom she has spoken so often, and whom she would gladly see again."

Before making any reply to what Pem flattered himself was an exquisite speech, the old man came close up to his visitor, and removing the magnifying glasses with which he had been at work, eyed him sternly under his shaggy brows.

"Young gentleman," he said, with a sharpness that Tracy did not quite like, "if a gentleman you are, I should be glad to know how you have dared take such a liberty with me, as to intrude under false pretences at such an hour?"

"I would not take a liberty with the smallest insect in your noble collection, sir, much less with the mighty intellect that has brought them together; but I have promised Miss Stormount to find a certain Paul Rocket, and I believe no one but you can tell me where to find him."

"Who, and what are you, that the child should send you on such an errand?"

"Well, doctor," said the unabashed envoy, handing him a card, "my name is Tracy, a gentleman, and, I may add, a poor student of nature, to which that charming young lady has been devoted ever since the taste for it was cultivated by yourself. Over our studies of animal, mineral, and vegetable, we have again and again invoked your assistance; and I have learned more from her recollections than from a hundred books." And honest Pem proceeded to tell all he knew and all he thought.

"There is one thing I must exact from you, young gentleman," said Dr. Thaddeus, as he turned to a large bureau behind him; "as you found me out through a chattering woman, that you show more discretion yourself. If I help you to find Paul, it will be on condition that you hold your tongue till I give you leave to speak."

"On my word of honour!" said Tracy, striking his hand in that of his host: "and if there is anything you particularly wish for in the animal or vegetable line, I'll do my best to get it for you."

The old man shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "Hundreds would do that, but they bring me the creatures *dead*; and though the stuffed collection increases, knowledge on other points stands still. There is one species I lost, which I would give worlds to replace, but I never shall. Paul has never managed to succeed."

"The better chance that I shall. Write it all down in black and white, and you shall have the best specimen of it that love or money can procure."

PEMBROKE TRACY TO MRS. PALMER.

"Somewhere in the Zodiac."

"DEAR COUSIN CECILIA,—In case half London should be breaking its heart over my mysterious departure, please receive this as an assurance that I am safe under the protection of the stars, and am taking a little trip at their desire. The principal constellation I deal with is, of course (being a student of Natural History), the Great Bear; and the prince of all good beasts is he, as I hope you will acknowledge some day. Starry secrets are not to be divulged, so I will only add that I am sitting in Casseopeia's chair, and have had a long chat with Andromeda. Excuse haste, but a young comet is going to start, and is just being put in the scales.

"Your lost Pleiad, so to speak,

"PEMBROKE TRACY."

This lucid epistle reached Cecilia's hands one morning when she was at breakfast with her husband. His eye was caught at once by the writing and foreign postmark.

"Is that from Pembroke?" he asked, hastily. "Give it to me!"

She had only just glanced through it, and handed it across the table with a faint smile. "It does not tell us much," she said, "except that he is safe and well."

"A silly, childish attempt at wit," said her husband; "but the postmark is some clue: Naples. Where on earth has he found money for such a freak?"

"In the sky, by his own account."

"I wish we had his secret then, Cecilia. I am sorry to touch on disagreeable subjects, but I am rather hard pushed just now, and I should be very glad if you could get a loan out of old Bourne."

"I cannot; you know I cannot," she said, with some agitation.

"Have you any idea why I want it?"

"I suppose you have lost money again, Robert."

"I shall lose more than money; I shall have my own and my wife's name dragged through the newspapers. You may look as you please—I know it for a fact. The whole story of Cairngorm will be blazoned to the world, with every kind of addition that may make it more palatable; and the charge brought against me will be, not only that I tricked Archdale into a trap, but that I made use of a lady's influence to persuade him. You best know how you will like that."

"I have heard this before," she said, more calmly than he expected, "and something else, which you seem ashamed of mentioning—that the only means of averting the disgrace was by laying it on an innocent person."

"Excuse me, Cecilia; you may not be aware of the facts of the

case. You know what your own share was, but I should be sorry to think you were privy to Archdale's game. He never meant to win, and it was well for him that his accident was a severe one. If the whole story has to be told, I shall take care he has his due, and I have witnesses to support what I say."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FOUND AT LAST.

"WE reverse the order of things, doctor. It is some years now since you paid me an early morning call, and brought up my coffee; but I always remembered I was in your debt. Thanks; a cup of tea, if you please, and a spoonful or two of brandy in it. It will be long before I shall care to touch coffee again."

The speaker being Cosmo Dangerfield, and his arrival at Mowatt's house to breakfast as unexpected as unwelcome, it was with a forced smile that the host performed his office. He had only returned that morning from the north, after a visit to Comber Court, for the express purpose of watching Emily Stormount's case. For many reasons he could not break with this dangerous man, and he disguised his aversion under a calm civility, which Cosmo found convenient to accept.

"I thought you were a confirmed coffee-drinker, Professor," he remarked. "What has become of my old friend, Justine?"

"You must ask your other friend, the Archdeacon," was the sarcastic reply. "He pretends to understand such cases."

"She is dead, then?"

"Exactly so; and as she had begun to practise upon me, I cannot think there is much to be regretted. I sent for you, however, to give her a chance of life, but you were out of town, basking in the smiles of beautiful Miss Granard."

The blood rose in Mowatt's cheek, but he only observed that Miss Granard had had anxiety enough to sadden her smiles.

"Humph!" sneered the Professor, "the Archdeacon may be proud of you. By the way, did you ever tell him your share of that dear little comedy we played with him at Ostend?"

"He knows your information came from me; I have never betrayed your professional secrets."

"Then I suppose I must not betray yours. I was wondering what his opinion would be of a doctor who took a bribe to give a false certificate."

Mowatt half sprang from his seat, but checked himself, and sat looking at his guest, his hand involuntarily clenching the table.

"That little affair of his niece's death seems to have been condoned," continued Cosmo, who had now pulled out his cigar-case: "but you attended the family afterwards, I understand, when his brother-in-law married again in that strange way."

"Professor, I have almost wondered sometimes whether still stranger things may not be true, and whether you are not helped by some even more wicked than yourself. Where have you been gathering this, which concerns none but the dead?"

"I have learnt this, and more, from the dead himself. If you doubt my word, you may believe his handwriting. And not to take more credit to myself than I deserve (for I am quite sensible of your compliment), I will just assure you that he was living when he wrote it."

"I suppose you are a ruined man," said Mowatt, coldly.

"Not ruined by any means, while I hold secrets that concern living persons."

"What has brought you back to England?"

"I had bound myself to Lazarus not to return for five years, and they are just over. Now, it seems, they are anxious to keep me in view, for I have a hint from them to stay here at present. They know I have only to hold out two years more, and that will not be difficult with such a friend to fall back upon as yourself, my dear fellow."

"What do you expect me to do for you?"

"That is easily told. We worked very well together once, and may do so again. You will find me bed and board in this comfortable house of yours, and give me up a room as a study, in which I can receive my private patients; and we can arrange an amicable plan of partnership at our leisure. Your reputation is made, and people are prepared for anything startling you may choose to introduce; if the old-fashioned ones are afraid of you, the others will follow you all the more when they know that, under certain circumstances and with proper precautions, you are large-minded enough to avail yourself of every resource philosophy can offer."

"You want me to take up Mesmerism as part of my practice?"

"Not exactly; but to own a partner, eminent for his devotion to those mystical studies, who can attend to such nervous cases as you may think fit, and of whose abilities you will speak in the highest terms. Fees and profits, of course, will go into the common stock; but if I take all the malades imaginaires and you the real ones, we shall both find enough to do. It will only be for two years, remember; when Emily is of age I shall be independent. She cannot give me less than a handsome annuity, and I may persuade her to make her home with me. Who knows what may happen meanwhile? If Archdale were but out of the way ——"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, no harm to anybody: India is a trying climate, and life is uncertain everywhere; but it was not that I referred to. There is a very ugly story about, reflecting on his honour as an officer and a gentleman in the matter of that race in which he got his fall. Unless he can quite clear it up, he will not find it very pleasant to show his face in England."

"What if I do not accept your terms?"

"Accept? What else can you do, my dear fellow, unless you wish all those who trust you now to turn their backs on you for ever? For such an action as yours there is no mercy; the boys in the street would have a right to hoot after you, 'Who wrote a sham certificate?' and you could only hang your head and pass on."

"I have heard enough for one morning, Professor. You shall have an answer when I have thought the matter over."

The philosopher pushed back his chair, and took up his hat. "Ammunition is running low, Mowatt, and times are changed. Can't you let me have something on account?"

His host took out his pocket-book. "It is true that I took your wages formerly, when I was starving; and in remembrance of that I will help you now—but not on account. Take that note, and make a good use of it, for that, at least, has been honestly made."

"I am not particular, my dear friend," laughed the Professor, as he withdrew, in good spirits, tolerably certain his net had been well thrown.

The scene shifts again, and we are under a southern sky in the cool of the evening, looking upon a blue sea in which fairy islands are visible through purple and golden mist, and along whose quays wander travellers without end, some of whom gaze and gaze again, as if endeavouring to stamp on their memories the beauties they must leave so soon behind; while others discuss the merits or demerits of the table d'hôte, or arrange their plans for getting away as soon as possible.

Of the rapt nature-lovers, Pembroke Tracy is not one. He has been missing all day, and now comes panting up to a group of English friends enjoying their after-dinner cigars and chat, with the triumph of well-earned victory.

"I've done it! I've won! The sweet thing is packed, and starts for England to-morrow. I would give something to see the custom-house officer's face when he gets the first squint at its fair proportions. Come, Willoughby, I'll trouble you for a fiver."

"All right," said the other, "there it is; only I may have to borrow it again to pay my bill. I had no idea you would succeed; they are only to be found in Ceylon, and are most difficult to take alive."

"That I can quite imagine, by the price I had to pay. It seems it was procured for a Russian prince's museum; and as they had just discovered it would never live at St. Petersburg, they were going to have it stuffed, when I appeared in time to save the precious life. Ugh! I shall not forget the vicious rush it made against the side of its cage. I made one bolt of it into the passage."

"Well, I give you joy of your purchase; and you are in luck to-day, for this gentleman tells us the steamer with the horses is signalled, and will be here to-night."

"Hurrah ! I shall get home to the partridges, then !" was Pembroke's response ; and he turned to acknowledge the bow which the "gentleman," as English courtesy called him, had made as soon as he was referred to. He was a well-made young man, in a kind of undress uniform, and his polite offers of service, if Mr. Tracy wanted to look at any particular horse, led the other to explain that it was not the steed but the rider he had been wanting to see ; a famous horse-breaker, who could tame anything.

"You have business with him, sir ?"

"Well, yes ; I have a letter for him, and am to wait for the answer. Perhaps you know the name—Paul Rocket ?"

The stranger smiled silently for a moment, and then replied, "I know the name, sir ; and I am the man. But who are you?—and who could have written to me ——"

"Never mind all that ; come along with me," cried Pembroke, joyfully, as he thrust his arm into that of his new acquaintance. "I have danced up and down after you till I had begun to think you as hard to catch as an Irish fairy."

"I am very grateful to you, sir," was Paul's first comment, when he had digested the doctor's letter, and mastered Tracy's story. "I have hoped that I might be ordered back to England some day ; but I was afraid of bringing others into trouble. I'd risk anything for Miss Stormount : and I owe Dr. Thaddeus so much, that a word from him is quite enough. I'll tell you what. I'll do, sir : there are some horses ordered to London, that one of our men was to have gone with. I'll secure the berth for myself ; it will be no loss, anyhow, for one of them has a temper, and they might not know how to manage him."

"Did you ever see the horse Cairngorm, that there has been all this fuss about ?"

"I saw him years ago, sir. What has been the fuss since then ?"

"That story about the steeplechase and Mr. Archdale ; it is all in the paper. They want to make out that the fall was a regular plant of Archdale's, and that only his bad accident saved him. I know the lady he is engaged to marry, and I should be sorry to think it can be true, though my cousin, Major Palmer, believed it."

"It is no more true, sir, than that you did it yourself. I was there at the time, and can tell you of plenty of witnesses, who know all the story. The young gentleman rode to please a lady, and had to pay heavily enough when he lost, and was obliged to give up the army, on account of his fall. He was as fine an officer as ever stepped, and as true a gentleman. If I had known of this, I'd have chanced everything to go off to England and clear him."

"He is in India himself, but others will be glad to have him cleared ; so I'll take care you get a hearing."

And thus it befel that one fine day Pembroke Tracy walked into his cousin's rooms, in Mount Street, and finding Cecilia alone, told

her what he had been doing, and asked where he could get hold of Bob, as he had something to tell him of consequence. Of course, he had to tell her first, and her agitation was great. "He will be very angry with me, but I must risk that. You will find him there," giving him the address of a tavern near St. James' Street. "He has a club there, and they meet to play, and not to receive visitors. Perhaps, Pem, I ought not to send you there—don't let me think I have done you an injury, dear boy. I have enough to make me wretched without that."

"Do you take me for a schoolboy, who knows nothing of the world?" was the question, by way of reply; and away went Pem on his errand. He gained admittance with some difficulty, and his cousin came out to speak to him, in better humour than he expected, having had a run of luck. He laughed at Tracy's Quixotism, as he called it, applauded his spirit, promised that fair play should be given all round, and invited him in to join their party. Man of the world as honest Pem was, he was rather flattered by this, but declined, as he wanted to be at ——— Riding School, to see a horse broken in. That chap who knew all about Cairngorm was going to show off a bit before some officers; and he had been specially invited, and wouldn't miss it for anything.

"You had much better come too, Bob, instead of staying in this stuffy place; you can lose your money on him as well as on anything else."

He had no idea that this high-principled advice would be taken; it was, therefore, with no small surprise that when he was in the riding school, chatting with one of his military friends, he saw Major Palmer come in, followed by an old man with a broad-brimmed hat over his white head, wearing a large pair of gold spectacles.

"Why, there is Bob himself, and the grandfather of all the Quakers toddling after him!" exclaimed Tracy in surprise.

The performance soon began; and the agility, adroitness, and courage of the horse-breaker, as he brought first one and then another powerful animal to meek submission, were no less remarkable than his gentleness. Nothing seemed to ruffle his temper, or tire his patience; and, as Pembroke observed, a decent horse grew ashamed at last of bothering so good a fellow. But when the last of the new arrivals came out, everybody saw it would be a struggle of a different character. Then began the contest between animal rage and human skill and coolness; and all present held their breath, for more than once it seemed as if no single arm could hold that tossing head so as to avoid the lashing out of the hoofs. Bets were silently offered, and as silently taken, and Major Palmer had booked two or three in the rider's favour; his experienced eye having decided already that the victory was won. And so it probably would have been, had not a voice, proceeding no one knew where, suddenly called out, "Paul! Take care!"

In a moment, just when every nerve was in tension, and every faculty of the brain required to be on the alert, nerve and brain alike appeared to fail the young man. He staggered, and was the next instant flung on his back, the excited horse dashing over him and charging the spectators. A scene of the wildest confusion followed; shouts of warning mingled with cries of pain; and when at last the grooms succeeded in mastering the animal, it was found that there was more than one sufferer to be attended to. Tracy, the first to rush to Paul's assistance, was called away by one of his friends, and told he was wanted elsewhere.

"I can't leave this poor fellow," he began, angrily, but was checked by his friend's grave face.

"You must come and see to Major Palmer, Tracy. Rocket's is a case for the hospital."

It appeared that the Major had been thrown down in the great confusion, and received a kick on the head from the horse before he could recover himself. Poor Pembroke, remorseful for having brought him thither, hastened to him.

"It is all over," was the verdict, after careful examination; "death must have been instantaneous. Who will break it to Mrs. Palmer?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but can you tell me how the poor young man is?" asked the white-haired gentleman in the broad-brimmed hat and gold spectacles, as he met Tracy the next day coming out of Westminster Hospital. Pembroke, having sorrowful duties to perform, only said he was doing well, though badly hurt.

"Poor fellow! I hope a subscription will be opened for him; I shall be happy to give my share. Should I be allowed to see him, do you think?"

"You can ask the nurse: it is the visitors' hour. Excuse me, I am in a hurry."

Pembroke hastened away, wondering where he had heard a voice like that before. Neither manner nor face seemed quite natural, he thought; and, if such a thing had been probable, he should have taken him for a detective in disguise.

The visitor had no trouble; his highly respectable appearance and manner of speaking impressed the nurse, and satisfied the surgeon, who was passing at the time. He took a seat by Paul's bed—it was curtained off from the rest, and there were but few of the others occupied. The injuries were progressing favourably, but he suffered a great deal of pain, and seemed much oppressed. The benevolent visitor watched his opportunity, bent over his pillow, and made a few passes over his head. The restlessness ceased; the eyes closed; the breathing came regularly. The nurse looked on in amazement.

"You *have* done him good, sir," she said; "I wish you were here oftener."

"Leave him to me for ten minutes; I will watch here, in case

he wakes," said the visitor; and he slipped half-a-crown into her hand, with a courteous compliment to her care. When she was fairly out of hearing, he stooped again over his patient.

"Paul, you can answer me?"

A whispered "Yes" came from the parched lips.

"What did you do with the papers you carried off?"

"I gave them to Dr. Thaddeus."

"What did he do with them?"

"He hid them in a box of his museum; one that had held a snake."

"How should you know the box again?"

"It has a label, in French, German, and English, cautioning people to beware, as it is dangerous."

"There was nothing else in it, besides the papers?"

"No; the snake was dead, and taken out to be stuffed."

"Where does Dr. Thaddeus live now?"

"At Ironstone Wharf—over Lazarus's stables; he goes by the name of Mr. Benoni."

The answers had been given with so much difficulty, and had gradually grown so faint, that the operator durst proceed no further. He, the disguised Professor, withdrew with cautious steps, advising the nurse, whom he passed on the way, to leave the young man perfectly quiet; he should soon call again.

So Thaddeus had been fighting against him all along—abetting, perhaps bribing, his faithless followers, and despising him and his science, as if they could only touch the timid and the weak! The time was come to show they possessed something more; he believed that he held a secret, for which the old man would pay in gold, but which should not be his without humiliation; and now, if ever, was the moment to try its power.

There was one of Lazarus's clerks over whom he had, no matter how, gained a good deal of influence; without this peculiar power over certain natures, he could never have carried on his trade at all. To this man, by whom he was secretly hated as much as feared, he betook himself now, and demanded an audience of Mr. Benoni. His acquaintance with the name made the other more ready to listen; and by a judicious combination of promises and threats, Cosmo Dangerfield obtained his guidance to the private door leading to the naturalist's apartments. Amélie said her master was not within; he had been fetched away unexpectedly by some gentlemen, in consequence of an accident. An accident? That was just what the benevolent white-haired visitor had come about; a special message to the illustrious Benoni, which he had faithfully promised to deliver. Might he be allowed to wait for him? Amélie doubted, but the clerk's presence seemed a reasonable guarantee; and though nothing would authorise her letting anyone into the doctor's study, there was a vestibule with benches and a case or two, where monsieur

could sit down, if he pleased. She had her cooking to attend to, and must leave him—which she did, with a curtesy of thanks for his well-timed gratuity.

“So these are your great man’s quarters—they are gloomy enough,” observed Dangerfield.

“Aye, you would not suppose that a man with such power and influence would spend his days in such a hole. You yourself, Professor, when your affairs were being arranged, little thought that everything was settled up here, did you?”

“My affairs settled by him?” repeated Cosmo, incredulously.

“Yes, why not? For years past he has kept an eye upon you; and you only were spared from utter ruin because he chose to let you go on. Take care how you provoke him now; for he may not always be so lenient.”

“He has had his reasons, no doubt, my friend; and I think I understand them. Do not let me detain you here; I may have some time to wait. Come and see me to-morrow at my lodgings; you will hear of something that will take you by surprise.”

The clerk withdrew, divided between his superstitious curiosity and his hatred of the person who excited it; and Cosmo Dangerfield was left to muse over what he had heard, and take what steps he pleased in consequence.

His first care was to look all round the vestibule, which contained nothing to repay the search. The study door, however, was only locked on the outside, and he felt no scruple in turning the key, and looking in. A strong, oppressive smell made him at first recoil; but on venturing further, he perceived nothing more alarming than a well-stuffed specimen of a serpent, fixed on a frame, in the act of darting at its prey. The sight made him shudder, for Paul had spoken truly of his constitutional antipathy to the race—an antipathy that amounted to loathing; and what was stranger still, in a man of his stamp, to almost paralysing fear. As he recovered from the first fear, almost smiling at his own weakness, his eye fell on a large case immediately below the cherished specimen. With a bound, he was close to it, greedily inspecting the triple label which young Rocket had described: the warning, in three languages, not to meddle with the dangerous contents. Here was the prize he sought; the opportunity put into his very hand. Stop, though—some one might overhear him at work. The door must be secured; and by help of the key, that was easily done. The next step was to examine the fastenings of the case; they were strong; and it was only with the help of some instruments he had brought with him, that he could get the sliding door to open. Pah! one would have supposed it had never been cleaned since the creature was taken out, years ago. What a hiding-place to choose for papers! Aha! they did not know with whom they had to deal. He would like to see the old fellow’s face when he found ——

What was this? There was something alive! Could it be ——?

A hiss—a rush—a gleam of awful brightness—a fearful cry! Oh, horror! horror!

“Help! or I am a dead man!”

“A gentleman has been waiting some time to see you, monsieur,” was the announcement that greeted the old naturalist, when he returned, accompanied by the two visitors who had fetched him away. “Tiens, though, he is gone,” added Amélie, as she preceded the party, with a light. “I did not hear him go.”

“Never mind,” said the doctor. “Give me the key of my room.”

“It must be there, sir; I have not touched it.”

“It is *not* there, woman; and the door is locked. Bring the light here, and see if it has fallen down.”

The light was brought, and then the woman gave a little scream.

“The key is *inside*, monsieur! He has got in, and locked us out!”

A peremptory summons to the intruder met with no reply. The gentlemen looked at each other.

“Could he get out of the window?” asked the first, who was no other than Archdeacon Burleigh.

“Impossible; it is too high. I am afraid this is something serious. Call up one or two of the men, Amélie. There was a smith below just now with his tools—tell him we want a door broken open.”

The summons was speedily obeyed, and the smith and another man were soon at work. The lock was removed, and an attempt made to push the door open.

“There’s something lying against it, sir,” said the smith; “it’s a man, I think. Please hold the light this way. What was that?”

What, indeed! The old naturalist knew too well; and staggered forward in consternation.

“He has opened the case, and let it out! Back, back, all of you, and leave me to manage it. God forgive me for leaving it unwatched!”

He made a step in advance as he spoke; but what he would have done was never known; for the vision of a fearful hissing head, rising out of the darkness, caused a confused rush backwards of most of the party, followed by the whirl and crash of a heavy missile, so exactly and powerfully flung, that the creature was killed on the spot. The Archdeacon had caught up the lock of the door, and found, in the excitement of the moment, the strength and quickness of his youth.

“I think it is all safe now,” he said, “and you fellows can come and lift this man up.”

It was done; and even the naturalist could spare no thought to his lost treasure, while the lifeless body was being examined. Notwithstanding the disguise and paint of the Professor, Mowatt, who was the doctor’s other visitor, was not long in recognising him; nor in

pronouncing that he was past all human skill. The snake, frightened, perhaps, by long confinement, had not touched him; there was no trace of even a bruise from the fall; the agony of the contracted features was that of horror alone. Nervous fear had been his instrument of torture, and by it he met his end; and science, skill, and religion, as they gathered round the powerless enemy, whom they would have saved, if possible, could only bow in silence, and leave him to his God.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

"I DO not wish to make you uneasy, my dear boy; but I do think that your mother suffers more than she will own, and this affair has vexed and excited her to a degree that is very bad for her health. Her one cry is, 'If he only would come home;' and yet I know she has not asked you to do so, and would scold me well if she were looking over my shoulder. It has occurred to me that if you knew this, you might be able to arrange a furlough, if only for a few months; but I shall say nothing to excite hopes that might end in disappointment."

Thus wrote Mrs. Raymond to her grandson, in the same envelope which contained his mother's outpourings of passionate indignation and grief at the attack upon his name and honour. The mail went out while the affair was fresh, and before the scenes of the last chapter had taken place; and after the letters were gone, the old lady was rather afraid of the step she had taken, and wrote in confidence to Sir Marcus Combermere to ask his opinion. He replied that she had done the right thing, only advised her to say nothing about it; and meanwhile he made his own arrangements accordingly.

And Christmas-tide came round again, and Mr. Bourne and his manager were busy in the office, winding up accounts and settling holidays, when a well-remembered voice hailed them both by name, and a hand, much stronger and firmer than when it had held the pen in those premises, grasped theirs in turn. Instead of answering his grandmother's letter, Ernest had just had time to find a substitute among his friends, and secure a place by the return mail. The matter had seemed to him so plain a duty that he would have made any sacrifice rather than not fulfil it; and in the rapid exchange of questions that ensued, he soon discovered that his coming was privately expected. Sir Marcus had taken his old friend into his confidence, and given him instructions, in the event of Ernest's arrival; and the latter found he had nothing to do but to follow them.

"Nonsense about going anywhere to-night, except Camelford Square. You will go home and dine with us, and start by the express to-morrow. Your mother and grandmother are keeping their Christmas at Comber Court. As to all those lies in the papers, my

dear fellow, they have been effectually contradicted and disposed of already, so that you will find even your mother has forgiven the whole business, and you must do the same. No one has worked harder to get justice done than my poor Cecilia. You know she is a widow?"

Ernest did not know it; his home intelligence was in arrears. He expressed his sympathy, which Mr. Bourne cut rather short.

"It won't do to say so, but I look upon it as a deliverance, and hope she may yet have a chance of a happier life. She has had a hard lesson, and I think she is all the better for it, in spite of her troubles. Of course you heard of the engagement between Frankland and Kate Combermere?"

"Yes; and my only wonder was that they had waited so long."

"Well, they would have waited longer still, if Lewis had foreseen what was coming upon him; but he thought himself sure of promotion, of making a fair income to settle upon; and lo and behold, he has had to throw up his berth altogether."

"Not on account of ill health?"

"No; he is more of a Titan than ever, for that matter; but the school has got into new hands, and they are making such changes in every direction, with new lights and new measures, that he and two or three more like him found they could not stay to unsay all that they had been saying for years, and resigned then and there. Just what a fellow like Frankland would do. In some respects it is rather a good thing; Combermere tells me he had been burning the candle at both ends for some time, sitting up half the night over a stiff historical work that is to put us all right on some hundred-and-one points on which we are wrong now. Even Titans cannot do without sleep, and Sir Marcus is more glad than sorry that these double tides are come to a standstill; so, while he is settling his plans and getting over the loss of his boys, which has cut him up very much, he is to tackle his big book at the Court, with Kate to look out his authorities. I only hope it will end in his staying there altogether, for Combermere's eyes trouble him sadly, and a son in the house would be an immense comfort. If my poor lads had lived, I should have had some one to care for my business when I'm gone; and my good wife would have had her hands too full to let herself be bullied by a greedy humbug of a woman, as she is now, in spite of all I can say. I thank you, my dear fellow," as Ernest helped him put on his coat; "I am heartily glad you have come home, and all I ask of you now is, not to make any settled plan without just hearing what I have to say."

The grievance of which the old gentleman complained had, indeed, come to a climax on this particular day. Miss Medlicott had set her heart on their all going down to Brighton, where, though not in the same apartments as her much-enduring friend, she would be close at hand, in comfortable quarters found at her expense. On being told that Mrs. Palmer could not leave town, and they could

not leave Mrs. Palmer in the precarious state of her health, the invalid's wounded feelings found vent in a flood of tears, and in a burst of spiteful denunciations of Cecilia, as designing and cruel.

"Yes, cruel," she repeated, as Mrs. Bourne began to remonstrate; "I mean what I say, and can prove it. Do you remember that poor crazy child at Comber Court being made quite ill by hearing, as she supposed, her mother talking to her? It was all a trick of Cecilia's; let her deny it if she can!"

"Oh, my dear, impossible. What makes you think so?"

"Think! I was in my room at the time, and heard it; and a pretty fright she was in when she saw what she had done."

"Then why didn't you tell me at the time? It might have been a very serious matter."

"And how would you have treated me if I did? Miss Wilmot was everything in those days, and I should only have got ill-will."

Mrs. Bourne sat looking at her in blank consternation. "Then it comes to this," she said, in the slow tone of one who is admitting an unwelcome fact: "you kept this to yourself while she was happy and prosperous, and you bring it up against her now when she is in heavy trouble; and you tell it to me, to stop my being kind to her. Well, if I had not heard it from yourself, my dear, I could not have believed it."

"Oh! of course I am wrong—I always am!" sobbed Miss Medlicott.

"No, I do not say you are always; but you are now—very wrong. You do not seem to feel in the least for a poor thing—she may have been a little foolish—but after all she has gone through, and left so badly off! I could not have believed it of you—it won't bear talking of: it won't indeed."

This was a great deal for Mrs. Bourne to say, and it meant even more, for it was the first step towards her emancipation from what had gradually become a heavy tyranny. Her eyes were opened at last. Her husband, in his satisfaction, had the magnanimity not to remind her that "he told her so."

"She might have ridden her free horse to death," was his private comment to Ernest, "but she couldn't make it kick a poor thing that was down."

Ernest met Cecilia at Mrs. Bourne's in the evening. The change from the fair vision he remembered, to the careworn lady in widow's weeds, who looked as if only yearning for rest, made his heart ache, notwithstanding his own glad hopes for the morrow; and his unaffected sympathy seemed to cheer her a little, or else she made an effort to make it appear so. She tried to ask his pardon for the attack on his name, which she knew to be so entirely undeserved; but he earnestly entreated her to say no more. The episode was one which could never be remembered by himself without self-reproach, and one for which he had deserved to suffer.

"Ah!" she said, "we all find out in time that troubles only grow where they have been planted. You will see Mr. Frankland at Comber Court: tell him from me that I wish him all happiness, as fervently as I have sometimes wished that I had kept my appointment to sail with him at Folkestone—yes, even if I had known that I should never come back to land!"

A sob escaped her as she quitted the drawing-room. Mrs. Bourne went after her, and Ernest saw no more of them that night.

He was to go north by the express, and his friendly host insisted on seeing him off; treating him more like a favourite schoolboy than a man just come from India, and standing on the step to give messages to all his friends, when two other passengers were waiting to get in. A hint from Ernest making him look round, he uttered an exclamation of amusement.

"You going too, doctor, and the pet patient with you? I only wish I was to be of the party."

A peremptory word from the guard cut this short, and Mowatt and Paul had only a minute to take their places; the recognition on both sides being simultaneous as the train moved on.

But for what he had heard before, it may be doubted whether Ernest would have recognised Paul Rocket in the pale young man, so carefully wrapped up and reclining uneasily against the side of the carriage; but Paul knew him at a glance, and the gleam of pleasure in his dark eyes recalled the face of the boy whom he had so often regretted.

The alternative offered Mowatt by Cosmo Dangerfield, either to be exposed before the public as dishonourable and fraudulent, or to become his partner in still deeper fraud, had nearly driven him to desperation. His good and evil angels wrestled for him several days, during which he kept Cosmo at arm's length; and the result was that he wrote to Archdeacon Burleigh, making a full avowal of some past transactions; asking him if it were true that for such yieldings to temptation there was no mercy—that a man could never so retrace his steps as to recover esteem? The answer was unexpected. Archdeacon Burleigh had no sooner read the piteous appeal, than he startled Mrs. Keith by the announcement of an immediate departure, and appeared with his bag at Mowatt's door that evening, a self-invited guest. What passed between them it would not become us to enquire; but from that time, Mowatt, who had almost resented the efforts once made to save him, and had looked upon himself as an injured, and certainly unappreciated man, could never speak of his kindness without emotion, and would have gone to the world's end at his bidding. Lives are not changed in a moment, but there must be one moment in which the change begins; and the gift of real self-abasement was the beginning of an upward course, which we may hope would continue to the end.

On the day of the accident, they were just sitting down to dinner, when Mowatt was summoned to Mount Street, Mrs. Palmer's condition requiring immediate care; and Mr. Burleigh accompanied him to the house in case he might be of service. There they met Pembroke Tracy, and learned from him the story of Paul Rocket. Agreeing that Dr. Thaddeus ought to be informed of the accident, they went in quest of the old naturalist. Whether they could have saved Professor Dangerfield by arriving earlier, can never be known; Mowatt always believed that he could, and that the man's own act had sealed his fate.

Mowatt made Paul his especial charge, and Dr. Thaddeus, who liked the young man, determined he should be properly educated.

When Paul was strong enough, which was not till Christmas-tide, he and Mowatt were invited to visit the Archdeacon: hence the meeting with Ernest.

They conversed but little during the journey. When Paul's weakness made him yield to slumber, Archdale could talk more unreservedly to Mowatt. Of Emily Stormount's health the doctor seemed reluctant to speak at all. He hoped for the best, but there were symptoms about her he did not like; and though her mother's papers had been recovered, the doubt would present itself to his mind whether she would live to make use of them.

The day wore on, the necessary changes were made, and now, in the darkening afternoon, they were nearing the little station. How Ernest's heart beat is beyond us to describe; there are moments like this that must be felt to be understood. His opposite neighbour, leaning back in his corner, watched the eager anticipation of the sun-burnt face, and bore his own pain as best he could. Truly, if seven years' diligence could give a claim to deserve the joy before him, Ernest Archdale had well earned his now; but so often had he pictured this return to himself, so often awakened from dreams of being there, that he could hardly realise the joy had come at last, even when he had sprung from the carriage, and found hands grasping his, and voices giving their hearty welcome. "Too cold to let the ladies come down. They are waiting for you at the Court. Ah, Mowatt, you here!—glad to see you, and Paul too. We shall meet some time to-morrow. Splendid weather, isn't it? Come along, Archdale—Shepherd will look after your traps—yes, you may shake hands with the Archdeacon, but I pledged my credit up there to bring you back before you were expected."

Thus Lewis rattled on; the new comer not hearing half he said. It was still like one of his dreams, even when the door was reached and the lights shone on beloved and venerated faces, and the wave of loving welcome flowed over his head in blessings and tears of joy; and before Ernest had time even to look round for that other face without which all would have lost its brightness, his mother's hand drew Adela forward, and her voice blessed them both. It

was like a dream, as a peaceful death is like sleep, where the reality is even more blessed than the vision. But dreams lose by telling, and happiness will not describe; as easily may the sketcher attempt to seize the hues of the sunset that are passing over hill and valley, and transfer to his paper an effect which varies every time he looks at it.

Many a happy Christmas Eve has passed on earth; but in the lives of our reunited lovers this one remained always unequalled. Their separation had tested their attachment and proved the quality of its ore; it had been spent in the faithful discharge of duty, and it was duty that brought it to a close. And even his mother felt no jealous pangs, had no thought of being neglected, when Ernest drew Adela into the library, to tell her all he had to tell.

"He has earned it, and she deserves him," was her comment to Sir Marcus: and Mrs. Archdale's voice was softer, her manner gentler that evening, than it had been for years.

"Did you know he was to come?" asked Emily of Mrs. Raymond.

"I hoped he would, after my letter: and I am glad I wrote."

"Will you persuade him not to go away again?"

"I must leave that to him, my love; he knows his own affairs best."

"Not better than I do," thought Emily, and she quietly formed her plans, only watching for an opportunity of speaking to him alone.

The death of her stepfather had made a great impression on Emily's mind; and at first haunted her nights; but now that the shock was wearing off, serenity had become the dominant expression of her countenance. As she said to Adela that night, when they talked over their deliverances, it had all come true—there were more with her than against her; and every attempt to do her or her champions harm, had turned against the hand that tried it. And now she could never be frightened again; even her dear mother must be satisfied that all had worked for her good.

"I only wish I knew—knew for certain, what that voice was I heard on the beach."

"Tell me what it said, and I may be able to explain it," said Adela.

And with a pink flush on her cheeks, and her eyes on the ground, Emily repeated the words she had heard, which she supposed referred to poor Paul. It was on their account that she had asked Mr. Tracy to find him.

"But you do not know, Emily, what Mr. Tracy has explained since he got home," said Adela. And she told her that the Professor had been watching her that day, and had used his skill in ventriloquism and imitation to deceive her for his own ends.

"It was himself, not Paul, he meant, dear; as you say, his

cruel deception recoiled on his own head. We will think of him no more to-night, except to forgive."

Emily's cheeks were now losing their glow, and her lip curled with a sort of smile. "I see my mistake; how childish it was. It would not do, would it, to let evil spirits of our own raising intrude where the rest may not come? Adela, I have often thought it has been a Christmastide to me ever since you took me under your wing; nothing evil has been allowed to touch me; I have never felt lonely or frightened that your presence has not brought me comfort. You have led me through the wilderness, and shown me the promised land beyond; yes, and if I must go over Jordan, you will show me a way by which I must cross."

"Not I, Emily, but a safer Guide, He who leads us both. Is anything on your mind to-night, child? I will stay with you if you are not inclined to sleep."

"Do, for I could not sleep if you left me. I have been talking with Sir Marcus about my dear mother's papers. He let me read them aloud to him, and listened to all I suggested, and I do not think he had any objection."

"And what do you suggest?"

"I want to tell Mrs. Raymond the whole truth at once, and assure her that, though I can do nothing yet, I shall make restitution as soon as I come of age. Who knows whether she may be spared to know it; and if she died, I should never know that she had forgiven the robbery. We could settle at our leisure how it would all be done, and there would be time to consult lawyers, and have things put in train, so that as soon as my signature is worth anything, I may get rid of the wicked burden. And one thing more—you have a right to give me another guardian—why not appoint Mr. Archdale?"

"Because he must, I fear, go back to India."

"He must stay here, and take care of those who have only him to lean upon. I know Sir Marcus thinks he might, and his mother will be so much happier! Promise me this, at any rate—that if he finds you can marry, you will not put it off on my account. My home would naturally be with my guardians, until I could take care of myself; and all my troublesome affairs would be taken off your hands, as Mr. Archdale is so good a man of business. Christmas-day will soon be here—if I have a surprise for Mrs. Raymond, why should not you prepare one for him?"

"You remember what I told you, darling—he will never touch any of your money."

"He may settle that with his own family, and welcome. But it will make his position all the easier as my guardian. It will be such a load off my mind to have all this settled! At any rate, I may tell my dear old friend to-morrow?"

"You may do what you think best, dear; and for the rest—well, we will wait and see what other people say."

And with a loving kiss they bade each other good-night, though each had enough to think of to banish sleep till to-morrow had begun.

Fain would we linger over that morrow's joyous feast, and breathe its atmosphere of gladness and blessing, which seemed to crown all that had gone before, and give strength and hopefulness for all that was to come. How the service affected the dark young man, who evidently was unaccustomed to it, but seemed to listen and observe so attentively. One thing struck Paul forcibly, and that was the look in those large, pensive eyes, that were all he could recognise in the child he had tried so hard to serve. They met his across the church, and though they dropped directly after, he carried the glance about with him all the rest of the day. Was it true, what the doctor had said—was there anything at work to sap so fair a life, now that its worst dangers seemed to have been taken away? Miss Joseph, who had resisted all pressing to go with her friends to the Court, consented to preside at the Archdeacon's table that day, and during the conversation that ensued, much light was thrown on the past by the united evidence of the guests so strangely united under one roof and in such unanimity of purpose. But from her, as well as from the medical authority, Paul could gather no satisfactory assurance of the heiress's health; and he could not help overhearing what Mowatt said later in the evening, almost as if thinking aloud, "She has had an angel to train her, because she was soon to be among them herself."

"Ernest, come in here!"

It was his grandmother's voice, full of tremulous agitation; and Archdale hastened to obey the summons. She was sitting by her fire; Emily was kneeling on the rug at her feet. Directly he looked at them both, he knew what had been passing, and Mrs. Raymond saw she had nothing to explain. "You know what this dear child has been telling me—you know what she wants to do?"

"I can guess, my dear granny; and I am sure we shall all agree in our sentiments towards her in the matter, and that no pains on our part should be spared to save her trouble or pain."

"You feel that, Mr. Archdale?" said Emily, looking up in his face. "Then you will carry out my earnest wish, and be my guardian?"

"I hear that you do wish it, and I am ready and willing, should I not go back to India. If you can persuade your friend that a home with us will make you happier ——."

"I told Adela so last night," said she, innocently. "Why don't you persuade her yourself?"

"It will be all your doing, my Snowdrop," murmured the old lady, as she stroked Emily's hair; and Ernest left them. "You can imagine that when I longed, as perhaps I did too much, to recover my own, it was not for myself, but for him."

"But he will not have any of it," said Emily, simply; "they have

both promised that to each other. You can give some to Mrs. Archdale, but they will not touch a penny. Sir Marcus says he should feel just the same."

"I see—I understand, child:" and Mrs. Raymond remained lost in thought.

"How little we know what we wish for!" she said at last. "It has been the dream of my long life to have that mystery cleared, and now it seems that a weight is to be laid upon my age, which it is unequal to bear. Yet that cannot be—strength is always given; and if we both live to see that day, Snowdrop, we must help each other. What would you have wished to do if this claim had never existed?"

"I have often wished, and wish it now more than ever, to do something for orphans. They have not all such earthly guardians as I have, and many of them do not know of those heavenly ones that are always defending them. I should have liked to be the foundress of a home to shelter poor children from trouble and want; but with the money I have a right to spend, there are other things for me to do, if I live to do them."

It may be imagined with what feelings Mrs. Archdale heard her mother's intelligence, and saw how her credulity had been played upon by the Professor. A shudder ran through her, to remember how he had tried, more than once, to make her his tool, even against that innocent girl; and, impulsive by nature, she was the first to protest against taking the poor child's fortune. Ernest would never use it, and for herself, she had ceased to care for anything beyond the wants of the day.

"The first thing you must do, dear mother, when Emily has satisfied her conscience, will be to make a will, bequeathing it all to her again."

"Wait till the time comes, my love. Two years are a long time for me to look forward to, and if I am gone, you will do as you please."

"They are making out their plans for Ernest to stay in England. Of course Mr. Bourne will lay it to my door, and say I have ruined his prospects; but it seems to me like a deliverance."

What Mr. Bourne really thought appeared a few days later, when he wrote to his former clerk, proposing that he should put his capital into his business, and, as junior partner, take the management of the office, which was becoming too fatiguing for himself. There was a small house of his to let, which would be Ernest's on moderate terms; and he made it clear that the proposed arrangement would benefit both parties, if living in London were no objection.

On this point much debate ensued; but the medical authorities inclined to the belief that the change for some months in the year would be good for Emily, now that all danger to her nerves was at an end. She herself expressed great satisfaction at the proposal; her wishes, she said, were being fulfilled, one after another; she should not despair now of any, however hard to obtain. Paul had been

brought over to see her, and she had been able to tell him a little of what she had felt about his kindness in her childhood, owning that she had often grieved over his disappearance, and feared he might have suffered on her account.

"You were sent to be one of my guardians, Paul, and I longed to help you in return : but I did believe that you would be watched over, as I was. And you were."

"It was your doing then Miss Stormount," said he, clearing his throat. "The thought of you and what you told me went with me everywhere, and seemed to keep me from going to the bad. I ask your pardon for taking away those papers, but I wanted to save you, and could think of no other way. It was the dread of my life that *he* would get a hold of me again, and make me do something to harm you ; but you were right—there were more with you than with him. I have never forgotten those words, and now I have seen them come true."

"And what are you going to do now? You do not look strong enough to ride."

"I am not to ride for a long time ; but the Archdeacon and Mr. Frankland have kindly promised to find me work, and to teach me a great deal that I ought to know, if I am to get on in the world."

"They will teach you more than that," she said. "But I hope you will get on, Paul, and that you will remember me sometimes, when you are a strong man, making your own way, and giving a helping hand to weak ones in trouble."

"Remember you, Miss Emily? If I may be allowed to be your servant it will be promotion enough for me."

"I shall be too poor for such a servant," she returned, with a smile; "and it is just as well, for I shall never want one. I am set apart to do a certain work, and when that is done, I shall go home—I know I shall. Do not tell anyone, but I do not mind your knowing—I have overheard them talking about me, and I quite understood what they meant. There is mischief here," laying her hand on her heart, "but it may go on some time yet. I hope it will till I am one-and-twenty, and can do what my mother told me. Those papers that Dr. Thaddeus sent back will be a great help. Why, Paul, what is the matter?"

Paul could not answer ; he bowed low, and hurried away. Was it true? was there no hope? could nothing be done by any amount of pains and trouble? he asked the Archdeacon. And in the excitement of his feelings, Paul revealed more than he thought for, of the charm the childish image had exercised on his heart, though his ambition had never soared higher than to be her servant. The thought of her had, as he truly said, often stood between him and temptation—he could do nothing that he should be ashamed of her knowing ; he had worked and saved, that he might some day come back, and ask if he might serve her once more. "And

when Mr. Tracy said she wanted me, I could have kissed the ground he trod on. I'd have come if I had known it would have cost me my neck—but I had no idea of this."

He was comforted, as well as he could be, with the hope that her delicate organisation might yet recover the attacks that had been made upon it. Everything depended on her being kept tranquil and happy. Meanwhile, other matters were settling themselves; and when the party broke up in January, it agreed to meet again in the spring for the celebration of the double marriage.

The two years of Emily's minority that followed were spent chiefly in the London home of her guardians; and Mrs. Raymond having removed to London also, they were frequently together, maturing the benevolent scheme that had become the great interest of both. With the full acquiescence of her daughter and grandson, Mrs. Raymond had resolved on reserving but a part of the property, and devoting the rest to the work which Emily had suggested. Plans were drawn out and preparations made against the time when the means would be in her power. "The Home of the Guardian Angels" became in Emily's eyes only second in interest to the home of her beloved guardian, Adela Archdale, where the precarious state of her own health was the only drawback to happiness. Even this seemed to be more hopeful when the period of her majority actually arrived; and the necessary business on which her heart was set was all safely transacted without her appearing to suffer from the excitement. Wonderful stories were told of recoveries, where youth was concerned and care taken; and Adela clung to the hope, even when she found her charge busy with the lawyer, to whom she was dictating her will. A will in which all her friends were remembered and an annuity settled on Miss Joseph. "It will come to you afterwards," she explained to Adela, "but I want to make up to her what she spent on poor mother. And then when the Home is opened, she may like to help there; she has often said she should, and this bequest will make her independent."

It had an ominous sound from those young lips; but Adela still hoped on.

It is Christmas Eve again, and Comber Court is full with most of our old acquaintances, and two who are quite new, and, perhaps, more talked of than any, though nobody can quite decide whether Kate's son or Adela's daughter be the finest child in the world. Cecilia Palmer, who is there with the Bournes, has also a fair-haired urchin to show, in whose existence her own is grown brighter, and who lords it over his cousin Pembroke, now (thanks to Lewis's teaching) a clerk in the Civil Service, and in his own opinion decidedly over-worked and underpaid. He is full of a visit to Dr. Thaddeus's collection, which is going to Vienna, under the care of Paul Rocket, now permanently installed in the old man's favour, and

largely remembered in his will, though of this Paul is unsuspecting. Nor does Pembroke quite understand why the old naturalist, who had paid all the expenses of his journey in search of Paul, should think it necessary to present him with a handsome gold watch for finding him.

"It is all you ever had for your trouble, Mr. Tracy," said Emily. "I was to give you something, I remember."

"Of course you were: only I did not like to remind you. Give me that flower you are wearing—you shall have another to-morrow."

She gave it with her usual simplicity, and as he moved away with his prize, she found Mrs. Palmer at her elbow.

"I want to ask your pardon, Miss Stormount, and have never been able before. Do you remember the last time we were here together, and your being frightened by a voice that told you some news from Ostend? It was my doing—out of thoughtlessness, I believe, and because I was vexed with myself and everybody. Will you forgive me?"

Emily was silent a few minutes. "I see it all now, and I was mistaken from first to last," she answered. "Do not think of it any more, Mrs. Palmer: the trouble of those days is all over, and I know that the spirit-world is in the hands that have the keys of life and death. I wonder now at my own fears, and feel as if nothing could frighten me again—especially on this holy night—the 'hallowed and gracious time' when no evil has power to harm."

True to his word, Pembroke was up early, bribing the gardener to get him the best camellia in the hot-house, with which he went in search of Bennet, coaxing her to see that Miss Stormount received it the first thing. Bennet, nothing loth, was on her way to deliver it, when she met Adela on a similar errand with her own Christmas offering, and asked her to give the young gentleman's flower. As Adela took it and went in, Bennet heard a cry: a cry for help.

"Oh, Bennet, what is this? My darling, my darling, speak to me! Oh, has it come at last, and I was not with you; when I would have given my life for yours?"

Yes, so it was; their experience needed no telling; even while summoning help and using remedies, both knew they were in vain. The dawn of the Nativity had broken on the sleeper in the land that was very far off, but the hallowed and gracious time had been true to its promise; at the approach of that last enemy, from whom no earthly love could shield her, the Guardian who never fails had been *called to the rescue*.

CAST THY BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

IN December, 1876, a short article appeared in the *ARGOSY* upon the French Poor of London. In answer to that appeal a sum of money was collected. Though small when the circulation of the magazine is considered, it was yet thankfully and gladly received by Mr. Brown, the Secretary, and was the means of alleviating much misery and distress during the severe winter that followed.

Sums varying in amount from sixpences and shillings in stamps to £5 notes—the latter sufficiently few to make their reception a red letter day for the object in hand—continued to flow in from time to time: not with the full tide of an abundant stream, but with a gentle current refreshing to the endeavours of those who ministered; and, we cannot doubt, in the words of the old proverb, blessing twice: the sender and the recipient. Nor have the fruits of that short article quite died out; for no later than last week, one of the most liberal responders to that first call again sent a donation towards this winter's Fund for the French Poor of London.

One of the pleasantest things in connection with the matter was the evident fact that many of those who responded had least to spare. Some such a missive as the following would often come: "I send sixpence" (or a shilling, as the case might be) "in stamps for the poor French. I wish I could send more, but I cannot afford it; you have my heartfelt sympathy." These notes were almost pleasanter, more encouraging to receive, than the occasional letter bearing a gilded coronet and enclosing a cheque or a post-office order for ten or twenty times the amount. That "the poor help the poor" is daily exemplified; they sympathise with necessities they are only too well able to realize and understand: sympathies from which many of their richer brethren are shut out, be it from thoughtlessness, or other causes.

Many reading that article probably argued—as we are all prone to argue in similar cases: "I have much to do in other ways: I feel disinclined to give a large sum—it is no use to send a small one." They scarcely remembered the saying: "Despise not the day of small things:" and the mistake of such an argument will be evident when it is stated that if every reader of the *ARGOSY* had forwarded only one single sixpence in stamps, a sum would have been the result which might have remained untouched in the bulk; for, invested, the interest alone would have sufficed, year by year, to supply the needs of the French Poor of London, and place many of the destitute in a position to help themselves for the time to come. This, perhaps, seems hardly credible to the reader, but it is a fact, nevertheless.

As it was, the money sent in did much good, and, it must be repeated, was thankfully received; but it was entirely exhausted long before the year was out, and a very great deal more besides.

And here it is well to take the opportunity of telling those who did send, whether small or large sums, that if they had seen for themselves the distress amongst the French, some of which they helped to alleviate, they would have gone on their way rejoicing for the privilege they had secured themselves. And it is a great privilege. Putting aside for the moment all hackneyed sayings, all set phrases, which too often sink into a mere form of speech, we know that it is more blessed to give than to receive; we feel, or we ought to feel, that the obligation lies on *our* side, when we give in the right spirit: for everything so given shall and must come back to the giver, according to the Eternal promise, if not in kind, yet in a far higher, better, and more enduring return.

There are difficulties to contend with in helping the French poor in London. Many have sunk so low that, without such help, they are lost for ever in this world: they can never raise themselves again. And in some cases it requires so much to do this, that if the effort fail—as fail it must sometimes—it becomes a grave matter. Occasionally, from the very doubt, the attempt has to be abandoned, and a chance of doing good is perhaps lost. But unless a regular Society were organized for this especial purpose, it is quite impossible for all claims to be attended to. Institutions there are for the alleviation of distress by the administering of small doles; but no Society that, if a man goes to it and says: “I am down in the world; there is an opening for me, but I want so much money to enter upon it,” will respond to the call. It is in such cases that the French poor in London might often be helped to permanent respectability and independence.

Again, there are an immense number of poor cases where a constant stream of small help through the winter is absolutely necessary to keep the home together, and the wolf from the door. Yet, again, there are passing cases—birds of passage it may be—where a little help administered keeps them, and has kept them, from positive starvation, or from going altogether to the bad. Let us take an instance, by way of illustration, that occurred only a few weeks ago.

A young Frenchwoman was beguiled over to one of our largest provincial towns, on pretence of becoming teacher in a school, and in a very short time indeed she found that she must leave. There she was, in the streets, friendless and penniless. The French Consul took compassion upon her and paid her fare to London, where she was found wandering about, having left her box at the station, no money in her pocket, and not knowing which way to turn. She was brought to the “Maison des Etrangers,” and Madame Blond, the schoolmaster’s good wife, had compassion upon her and took her in. The French Society, when applied to, paid her journey to Paris.

The next day Madame Blond accompanied the unhappy woman to the railway station, and put into her hands a few shillings to supply the wants of the journey. Madame Blond's subsequent report was worth hearing. "Poor girl!" she said, "she had not a farthing in her pocket, which she turned inside out to show me. She burst into tears, half suffocated me in an embrace, blessed the giver, and said she should like to kiss his feet." An uncomfortable way, certainly, of returning thanks, but to a Roman Catholic, with the Pope's receptions in her mind, no doubt a lively compliment. At any rate, it proved her gratitude. And how pleasant it is to meet with that rare virtue in the heart of man or woman! not for the expressions it gives forth, which may now and then lead us into the snare of thinking we have done a meritorious action: but as an evidence of some good lurking in the heart: creating a hope that a little seed has been sown in ground that will bring forth fruit, though it may be after many days.

This was a passing case, yet one needing a little help. It was over and done with. There are plenty of permanent cases, where the help has to be larger and more frequent: cases, many of them, that can only be realized and relieved by a house to house visitation: the best and safest way of distributing charity. As in a former paper, so again a few instances may be cited as the best means of bringing before the reader some of the trouble and sorrow endured by these exiles in a strange land.

Accompanying the missionary one cold winter's afternoon, our first call was upon some new people who had lately turned up. We entered a miserable house in a narrow street, and groped up a dirty staircase to the back room of the first floor. The occupants were out. There was no lock upon the door, which was fastened with a piece of cord. We undid it and entered the room, partly out of curiosity, partly as an experience. A sad experience indeed. The room was absolutely bare: not a chair or table by way of furniture. In one corner some straw, covered with a piece of coarse sacking, did duty for a bed. Here the husband, wife, and two little children slept, with nothing to cover them on the coldest nights of that bitter winter.

An empty box stood in the middle of the room; one of those old wine-cases that the poor often turn into coal-scuttles. This served them for a table and chair; upon it they eat such nourishment as they could procure. A small cupboard held a few dried crusts of bread, all they possessed of food. One little tin saucepan was upon the hob. The grate was of course empty. We turned the saucepan upside down upon the box, placed half-a-crown beneath it, and going out tied up the door again: leaving no trace of our entrance but the money and the saucepan reversed. "They will think an angel has visited the room," said the missionary, laughing; and no doubt the discovery would be a source of mystery to them as much as of satisfaction.

Later on in the afternoon we went back to the room. The people had returned. They had been out searching for work, and had found

none—how could they? They were shivering with cold, were slenderly clad, and looked almost starved. They had not had any food for days, beyond the broken pieces of bread alluded to: no coals, and no refuge in bed, for they had no blankets to cover them. For some years the man had been earning a livelihood in Manchester, but trade failing, he was thrown out of employment. He came to London, and there fell into the lowest depths of misery. Without help from some source or other, how were these people, who had lost hope, energy, and courage, ever to raise themselves again? As good tell a paralysed cripple to get up and walk. Their children would probably have died—it was to their credit that the little creatures looked less starved and emaciated than their parents—and who knows what might have become of the latter?

A few articles of furniture, including blankets, were sent in to them that afternoon; the man went to the *Maison des Etrangers* for a sack of coals, and they procured themselves some plain food. Eventually he managed to find work, gradually got about him clothes and furniture, and so recovered some of the lost ground. They were rescued, but never prosperous: and when, last September, a situation was offered him in France, through an old comrade, they packed up and left England, with the hope of a bright future before them.

Our next visit was to a man who was no new case, but a sad one enough. His trade was that of a locksmith, bell-hanger, and gasfitter. He was doing well once, but met with an accident to his hand, which made him unable to work for some months. Somehow, after that, the world never went well with him; and this afternoon we found him at the very lowest ebb. He now lived in a cellar, fitted up as a blacksmith's shop, with nothing left to show what had been but the empty forge and the blackened walls. No work was going on; no cheerful sound of hammer and anvil; no merry sparks flying upwards to relieve the gloom; no song accompanying the clang of the iron. The cellar was cold and dismal, almost dark at midday; the flooring was the bare earth; no windows or even sashes were there; shutters alone filled up the opening. Through these the wind came rushing and howling in with a force that made us shiver as we stood. A bed, an old box or two, and a small deal table completed their list of goods and chattels. It was no better, indeed worse, more cold and uncomfortable, than if they had encamped in the middle of the road. They had a roof to cover them, and that was the utmost that could be said. A damp, earthy smell half suffocated one on entering. People might die here—could they possibly live here? Yet live there they did, throughout the whole winter, the man, the woman, and the child; and in that place they are to-day.

His appears to be one of those hopeless cases where everything turns out badly; the world against him, he against the world. Nothing seems to prosper with him. It ought, perhaps, to be added that there was one thing in disfavour of the man, and he was promised

that if he would remove this blot—it was quite within his power to do so, for it was not drink, or anything requiring especial strength and resolution—he should be helped again, and if possible placed in permanent work. This promise he would not give. Only last week he was visited again, and talked to a little; he listened and finally burst into tears, but still withheld the required promise. Yet there must be some hope of a man whose heart can be reached, if not touched, by a few simple words.

We went on to another family lately come over. Here, too, destitution stared one in the face. An aged woman between eighty and ninety, her daughter and granddaughter. They were penniless; had not even a decent garment: all had been pledged for food and rent. All hope was now centred upon the daughter, who possessed one accomplishment, by which she might earn a livelihood, but had no clothes in which to seek work. Without help how was this to be done? Help, however, came to them from various sources, and they are now prospering.

Not far from here live a man and his wife and ten children; a man thoroughly industrious, but often out of work. How they live is a mystery. Often they have nothing but bread to eat for weeks together. You may go in occasionally and see the mother, pale but always cheerful, surrounded by six or eight little hungry mouths, white faces with staring eyes, spreading treacle on bread, and satisfying their appetites as far as she can. Shoeless feet and ragged frocks are the chronic condition of half the number. The old grandfather and grandmother for many years went about selling French newspapers, and thus earned a most laborious living until strength failed them through age. The couple have now been set up in a shop where they sell a little of everything; and lately the old woman complained in pathetic tones, in which there was something almost ludicrous, that the wicked boys in the street came and stole all her bottles of gingerbeer. If the “establishment” does not succeed, nothing is left to them but the workhouse; sad fate for a couple who have passed a long life together, to be separated at the end of their days: when the shadows are lengthening, and the night is drawing in, and they most need the consolation of each other’s companionship.

Beyond this again, lives a man with five children, also thoroughly hard-working. He is a designer in wood, and works in marqueterie for some of the large houses. But work fails him sometimes. Not unfrequently he is out from morning till night seeking labour, or trying to sell a pattern, and returns to an empty cupboard and hungry children, having done nothing. Added to this, he suffers terribly from bronchitis. Only lately his wife said: “He often comes home tired to death, and out of spirits for want of work—his cough so bad that he has to go and stand in the yard until the fit is over. I sometimes think he will be suffocated.”

Some time ago a husband, wife, and three children were found in

a back room without food and almost without furniture, the children unable to go out for want of boots and clothing, the wife pale and emaciated, also without boots, and daily expecting to be laid aside for a time. One little child had died from want. The husband was a professor of music, and had once been in good circumstances. Now, even their bedclothes were gone; not so much as a saucepan or a plate was left; his coat was also pledged. In the midst of this starvation, he was calmly sitting upon an old box, writing verses and setting them to music, hoping to sell them—a forlorn hope, indeed. “This is worse than useless,” said the missionary; “this will not give you bread.” “It is all I can do,” he replied, with a helpless sigh of despair, almost raising anger with pity. The wife, in her condition, seemed the saddest case of all. “Could you take a little wine,” she was asked, “if it were given to you?” her pale, drawn features exciting compassion. “Could I?” she cried, the blood rushing to her face, and tears to her eyes: “I feel dying for want of nourishment.” Eventually things got better for them; the man is once more prosperous. Mr. Brown met him a few days ago well dressed and full of work. “Had you not come to me with help when you did,” he remarked, “we must all have died of starvation.” And very probably they would, for the man had a sensitive, but weak nature, quite unable to struggle against and surmount its difficulties.

But there is a sadder case, which may be lightly touched upon. The family had been in dire distress, and were found out when it was too late. The mother’s health and strength had all gone. One day she was taken ill, and before two little creatures could be ushered into the world the mother’s life had fled, and with it the lives unborn. Who can measure the silent martyrdom that woman must have endured?

One of the best and most encouraging cases has lately fallen into terrible misfortune. Some years ago the man was reduced to the greatest poverty. He was brought out of this, procured himself a good situation, and has since kept his wife and three children in comfort. More respectable people for their station, do not exist. One day last summer he and his wife went out for a walk, and called at a public-house for a glass of beer. At the same moment in came three rough sailors. At once one of them began to abuse the man for a Frenchman, went up to him, and without the slightest provocation or warning dealt him a terrible blow in the eye. He had taken no notice of the sailors, or given the least reason for the assault; a quieter, more inoffensive man does not live.

At once he was taken to the hospital, where it was found necessary to remove the eye. To make the matter worse, it was his only available eye for work: for years he had suffered from cataract in the other. The doctor endeavoured to cure it; and before finally leaving the hospital the unhappy man underwent five operations. He was then discharged as incurable, and left with the eye worse than when

he entered. At another hospital, the doctors said his only remaining chance lay in glasses. Now, after some months, he has gone back to his situation. With a most powerful magnifying spectacle he can see just enough to work; but how long will it last? When the day is at all gloomy or foggy, he has to be led through the streets. Thus, from no fault of his own, he has become hopelessly disfigured and incapacitated, and probably ere long will be unable to work for the rest of his life. His wife is delicate, has young children, and is able to do very little towards their support. The man, it may be added, who has caused all this trouble, was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour.

For such cases, and very many others, help is constantly needed. Without this help the greater number would sink into hopeless misery; but, wisely given, hard times are tided over, special needs are met, and the rescued are able once more to fill their allotted place in life.

The "*Maison des Etrangers*" is now at 6, Frith Street, Soho Square. The ground floor is devoted to the school, where from forty to fifty children daily assemble, and are well taught and cared for by M. Blond and his good, motherly wife. The first floor is devoted to the Mission. Here Mr. Brown holds his Sunday and week-day meetings; the room is generally full, and the people take a real interest in what is said to them. On Mondays the mothers' meetings still flourish, and on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons Mr. Brown is there to hear and enquire into cases of need and distress. At other times he visits the poor in their own homes. A room is about to be opened containing two or three beds, to meet the wants of destitute men who come for passing help. In this manner for a little time they will be under supervision, and whilst their cases are being enquired into will not want for a bed and food.

Last year between forty and fifty tons of coal were distributed to the French. Those who could pay had it at a little under cost price—much less than they would be charged in a small retail shop; and those who could not pay received it gratuitously. On Christmas Day a dinner is given to about a hundred of the poorest of the men; and one of the saddest, yet most interesting experiences, is to visit, a short time before the day, with the missionary, the various registered lodging-houses, and invite some of these destitute men to the dinner. Last year not only was the mission-room full to overflowing, but the school-room had to open its doors to those who could not find place upstairs. Roast beef and mutton, steaming plum-puddings and mince-pies, cheese and salad, gladdened their eyes; and as each man left the room, warmed and filled, a brand-new shilling was given to him, left by a visitor, interested in the cause, for that purpose.

Those with families are not admitted—the line must be drawn somewhere—and so, on Christmas eve, the mothers come and take away a

good dinner of beef, pudding, &c., which they eat in their own homes.

For all these things help is needed, and there are very few who directly or indirectly give that help. Any contributions—be the sums what they may—sent in to Mr. S. R. Brown, 6, Frith Street, Soho Square, London, W., will be gratefully received by him.

Eighteen centuries ago, St. Paul in his Epistle to Timothy, shortly before suffering martyrdom, said: "In the last days perilous times shall come. . . . For men shall be lovers of their own selves. . . ." Let not this sin of selfishness—so prevalent in this our day and generation—be laid to your door or mine, beloved reader; but in our walk through life let us rather endeavour to carry out his injunction, one of the best and sweetest he ever wrote: "BEAR YE ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS, AND SO FULFIL THE LAW OF CHRIST."

CHARLES W. WOOD.



"NOT GOOD."

"ARE you good?" the mother questions; and from out the shadowy corner
The baby voice sends fearless back the answer quick and true,—
"No, I *are* not!" and the soft round cheeks are scarlet yet with passion,
And the wondrous eyes are brimmed with tears which nearly quench
the blue.

The sunny curls are drooping low on the snowy neck and shoulders,
And the chubby hands are tightly clasped in petulant despair:
"I *are* not, and I won't be good," is the heart and tongue's defiance,
And all within is darkest gloom where the outside is so fair.

Thus chafes the rebel soul of man against the law that guards him—
Against the tender guidance of his Heavenly Father's hand,
Which would keep his steps from straying in a wilderness of danger,
And bring him safe past all his foes to the good and pleasant land.

And thus lowers the cloud of evil above God's fair creation;
When the world is drest in festive robes forth stalks the ghost of ill;
And the cry of fallen nature is the child's cry from the corner,—
"Not good!" though all were perfect did it but obey God's will.

EMMA RHODES.

THE RECTOR OF ST. MATTHEW'S.

WHEN lawyers get a case into their hands, no living conjurer can divine when their clients will get it out again. The hardest problem in Euclid was never more difficult to solve than that. Mr. Brandon came up to town on the Monday morning, bringing me with him; he thought we might be detained a few days, a week at the utmost; yet the second week was now passing, and nothing had been done: our business seemed to be no forwarder than it was at the beginning. The men of law in Lincoln's Inn laid the blame on the conveyancers; the conveyancers laid it on the lawyers. Anyway, the upshot was the same—we were kept in London. The fact to myself was uncommonly pleasant, though it might be less so to Mr. Brandon.

The astounding news—that the Reverend William Lake was to have St. Matthew's—and the return of Miss Cattledon from her visit to the sick lady at Chelmsford, rejoiced the ears and eyes of the parish on one and the same day. It was a Wednesday. Miss Cattledon got home in time for dinner, bringing word that her relative was better.

"Has anything been heard about the living?" she enquired, sitting, bonnet in hand, before going up to dress.

Miss Deveen shook her head. In point of fact, we had heard nothing at all of Sir Robert Tenby or his intentions since Mr. Lake's interview with him, and she was not going to tell Cattledon of that, or of Sir Robert's visit on the Sunday.

But, as it appeared, the decision had been made public that afternoon, putting the whole parish into a ferment. Dinner was barely over when Dr. Galliard rushed in with the news.

"Only think of it!" he cried. "Such a piece of justice was never heard of before. Poor Lake has not the smallest interest in the world; and how Sir Robert Tenby came to pick him out is just a marvel. Such a stir it is causing! It's said—I don't know with what truth—that he came up here on Sunday morning to hear Lake preach. Mrs. Herriker saw a fine barouche draw up, high-stepping horses and powdered servants; a lady and gentleman got out of it and entered the church. It is thought now they might have been Sir Robert and Lady Tenby."

"I shouldn't wonder but they were," remarked Miss Deveen.

"Has Mr. Lake *really* got the living given to him?" questioned Cattledon, her eyes open with surprise, her thin throat and waist all in a tremor, and unable to touch another strawberry.

"Really and truly," replied the doctor. "Chisholm tells me he has just seen the letter appointing him to it."

"Dear me!" cried Cattledon, quite faintly. "*Dear* me! How very thankful we all ought to be—for Mr. Lake's sake."

"I daresay *he* is thankful," returned the doctor, swallowing down the rest of his glass of wine, and preparing to leave. "Thank you, no, Miss Deveen; I can't stay longer: I have one or two sick patients on my hands to-night, and must go to them—and I promised Mrs. Selwyn to look in upon her. Poor thing! this terrible loss has made her really ill. By-the-by," he added, turning round on his way from the room, "have you heard that she has decided upon her plans, and thinks of leaving shortly?"

"No—has she?" returned Miss Deveen.

"Best thing for her, too—to be up and doing. She has the chance of taking to a little boys' preparatory school at Brighton; small and select, as the advertisements have it. Some relative of hers has kept it hitherto, has made money by it, and is retiring ——"

"Will Mrs. Selwyn like *that*—to be a schoolmistress?" interrupted Cattledon, craning her neck.

"Rather than vegetate upon her small pittance," returned the doctor briskly. "She is an active, capable woman; got all her senses about her. Better teach little boys, and live and dress well, than enjoy a solitary joint of meat once a week and a turned gown once a year—eh, Johnny Ludlow?"

He caught up his hat, and went out in a bustle. I laughed. Miss Deveen nodded approvingly; not at my laugh, but at Mrs. Selwyn's resolution.

The stir abroad might have been pretty brisk that evening; we had Dr. Galliard's word for it: it could have been nothing to what set in the next day. The poor, meek curate—who, however good he might have been to run after, could hardly have been looked upon as an eligible, bonâ-fide prospect—suddenly converted into a rich rector: six hundred a year and a parsonage to flourish in! All the ladies, elder and younger, went into a delightful waking-sleep, and dreamed dreams.

"Such a mercy!" was the cry; "*such* a mercy! We might have had some dreadful old drony man here, who does not believe in daily services, and wears a wig on his bald head. Now Mr. Lake, though his hair is getting a little grey, has a most luxuriant and curly crop of it. Beautiful whiskers too."

It was little Daisy Dutton said that, meeting us in the Park road; she was too young and frivolous to know better. Miss Deveen shook her head at her, and Daisy ran on with a laugh. We were on our way to Mrs. Topcroft's, some hitch having arisen about the frames for Emma's screens.

Emma was out, however; and Mrs. Topcroft came forward with tears in her eyes.

"I can hardly help crying since I heard it," she said, taking her handkerchief out of the pocket of her black silk apron. "It

must be such a reward to him after his years of work—and to have come so unsought—so unexpectedly! I am sure Sir Robert Tenby must be a good man.”

“I think he is one,” said Miss Deveen.

“Mr. Lake deserves his recompense,” went on Mrs. Topcroft. “Nobody can know it as I do. Poor Mr. Selwyn knew—but he is gone. I think God’s hand must have been in this,” she reverently added. “These good and earnest ministers deserve to be placed in power for the sake of those over whom they have charge. I have nothing to say against Mr. Selwyn, but I am sure the parish will find a blessing in Mr. Lake.”

“You will lose him,” remarked Miss Deveen.

“Yes, and I am sorry for it; but I should be selfish indeed to think of that. About the screens,” continued Mrs. Topcroft; “perhaps you would like to see them—I am sorry Emma is out. One, I know, is finished.”

Not being especially interested in the screens, I stepped into the garden, and so strolled round to the back of the house. In the little den of a room, close to the open window, sat Mr. Lake writing. He stood up when he saw me and held out his hand.

“It is, I believe, to you that I am indebted for the gift bestowed upon me,” he said in a low tone of emotion, as he clasped my hand in his, and a wave of feeling swept over his face. “How came you to think of me—to be so kind? I cannot thank you as I ought.”

“Oh, it’s nothing; indeed I did nothing—so to say,” I stammered, quite taken aback. “I heard people say what a pity it was you stood no chance of the living, after working so hard in it all these years; so, as I knew Sir Robert, and knew very well Lady Tenby, I thought it would do no harm if I just told them of it.”

“And it has borne fruit. And very grateful I am; to you, and to Sir Robert—and to One who holds all things, great and small, in His hands. Do you know,” he added, smiling at me and changing his tone to a lighter one, “it seems to me nothing less than a romance.”

This was Thursday. The next day Mr. Lake paid a visit to the bishop—perhaps to go through some formality connected with his appointment, but I don’t know—and on the following Sunday morning he “read himself in.” No mistake, about his being the rector, after that. It was a lovely day, and Mr. Brandon came up in time for service. After he knew all about it—that I had actually gone to Sir Robert, and that Mr. Lake had got the living—he asked me five or six hundred questions, as though he were interested, and now he had come up to hear him preach.

You should have seen how crowded the church was. The ladies were in full force and flutter. Cattledon got herself up in a new bonnet; some of them had new rigging altogether. Each individual damsel looked upon the rector as her especial prize, sure to be her own. Mr. Lake did every scrap of the duty himself, including the

reading of the articles : that delightful young deacon's cold had taken a turn for the worse, through going to a water-party, and he simply couldn't hear himself speak. Poor Mrs. Selwyn and her daughter sat in their pew to-day, sad as the crape robes they wore.

Did you ever feel nervous when some one belonging to you is going to preach—lest he should not come up to expectation, or break down, or anything of that sort? Mr. Lake did not belong to me, but a nervous feeling came over me as he went into the pulpit. For Mr. Brandon was there with his critical ears. I had boasted to him of Mr. Lake's preaching; and felt sensitively anxious that it should not fall short.

I need not have feared. It was a very short sermon, the services had been so long, but wonderfully beautiful. You might have heard a pin drop in the church, and old Brandon himself never stirred hand or foot. At the end of the pew sat he, I next to him; his eyes fixed on the preacher, his attitude that of one who is absorbed in what he hears. Just a few words Mr. Lake spoke of himself, of the new relation between himself and his hearers; very quiet, modest words bearing the ring of truth and good-fellowship.

"That man would do his duty in whatever position of life he might be placed," pronounced old Brandon, as we got out. "Robert Tenby's choice has been a good and wise one."

"Thanks to Johnny Ludlow, here," said Miss Deveen, laughing.

"I don't say but what Johnny Ludlow has his head on his shoulders the right way. He means to do well always, I believe; and does do it sometimes."

Which I am sure was wonderful praise, conceded by old Brandon, calling to my face no end of a colour. And, if you'll believe me, he put his arm within mine; a thing he had never done before; and walked so across the churchyard.

The next week was a busy one. What with Mrs. Selwyn's preparations for going away, and what with the commotion caused by the new state of things, the parish had plenty on its hands—and tongues. Mr. Lake had begged Mrs. Selwyn not to quit the rectory until it should be quite and entirely convenient to her; if he got into it six or twelve months hence, he kindly urged, it would be time enough for him. But Mrs. Selwyn, while thanking him for his consideration, knowing how earnestly he meant it, showed him that she was obliged to go. She had taken to the school at Brighton and had to enter upon it as speedily as might be. A few days afterwards she had vacated the rectory, and her furniture was packed into vans to be carried away. Some women went into the empty house to clean it down; that it might be made ready for its new tenant. Poor Mr. Selwyn had repaired and decorated the house only the previous year, little thinking his tenure of it would be so short.

Then began the fun. The polite attentions to Mr. Lake, as curate, had been remarkable; to Mr. Lake, as rector, they were

unique. Mrs. Topcroft's door was besieged with notes and parcels. The notes contained invitations to teas and dinners, the parcels small offerings to himself. A parson about to set up housekeeping naturally wants all kinds of articles; and the ladies of St. Matthew's were eager to supply contributions. Slippers fell to a discount, purses and silk watch-guards ditto. More useful things replaced them. Ornamental baskets for the mantelpiece, little match-boxes done in various devices, card-racks hastily painted, serviette rings composed of coloured beads, pincushions and scent-mats for the dressing-table, with lots more things that I can't remember. These were all got up on the spur of the moment; more elaborate presents, that might take weeks to complete, were put in hand. Chair and ottoman seats to be worked in wool or silks, banner-screens for the mantelpiece as elaborate as Emma Topcroft's, wax flowers to be preserved under a glass case, beautiful antimacassars, costly cushions for sofas, knitted counterpanes, carved leather picture frames, and so on—you never heard of such a list. In vain Mr. Lake entreated them not to do these things; not to send *anything*; not to trouble themselves about him, assuring them it made him most uncomfortable; that he preferred not to receive presents of any kind: and he said it so emphatically, they might see he was in earnest. All the same. He might as well have talked to the moon. The ladies laughed, and worked on. Daisy Dutton had the impudence to dress a wax doll to send to him; it was the only sort of work she knew how to do, she said, and perhaps he'd accept it for that reason: when every lady was working for him, *she* did not like to be the only idle one left out.

"Mrs. Topcroft, I think you had better refuse to take the parcels in," he said to her one day, when a huge packet had arrived, which proved to be a market-basket, sent conjointly by three old maiden sisters. "I don't wish to be rude, or do anything that would hurt kind people's feelings; but, upon my word, I should like to send all the things back again with thanks."

"They would put them into the empty rectory if I did not take them in," returned Mrs. Topcroft. "The only way to stop it is to talk to the ladies yourself. Senseless girls!"

Mr. Lake did talk—as well, and as impressively as he knew how. It made not the slightest impression; and the small presents flocked in as before. Mrs. Jonas did not brew a "blessed great jug of camomile-tea," as did one of the admirers of Mr. Weller, the elder; but she did brew some "ginger-cordial," from a valued receipt of her late husband, the Colonel, and sent it, corked-up in two ornamental bottles, with her best regards. The other widow, Mrs. Herriker, was embroidering a magnificent table-cover, working against time.

We had the felicity of tasting the ginger-cordial. Mrs. Jonas gave a small "at home," and brought out a bottle of it as we were leaving. Cattledon sniffed at her liqueur-glass surreptitiously before drinking it.

"The chief ingredient in that stuff is rum," she avowed to me as we walked home, stretching up her neck in displeasure. "*Pine-apple rum!* My nose could not be mistaken."

"The cordial was very good," I answered. "Rum's not a bad thing, Miss Cattledon."

"Not at all bad, Johnny," laughed Miss Deveen. "An old sailor-uncle of mine, who had been round the world and back again more times than he could count, looked upon it as the panacea for all earthly ills."

"Anyway, before I would lay myself out to catch Mr. Lake, as that widow woman does, and as some others are doing, I would hide my head for ever," retorted Cattledon. And, to give her her due, though she did look upon the parson as safe to fall to her own lot, she did not fish for him. No presents, large or small, went out from her hands.

That week we dined in Upper Brook Street. Miss Deveen, Mr. Brandon, the new rector, and I; and two strange ladies whom we did not previously know. Mr. Brandon took Anne in to dinner; she put me on her left hand at table, and told me she and Sir Robert hoped I should often go to see them at Bellwood.

"My husband has taken such a fancy to you, Johnny," she whispered. "He does rather take likes and dislikes to people—just as I know you do. He says he took a great liking to me the first time he ever spoke to me. Do you remember it, Johnny?—you were present. We were kneeling in the parlour at Maythorn Bank. You were deep in that child's book of mine, "*Les contes de ma bonne,*" and I had those cuttings of plants, which I had brought from France, spread out on newspapers on the carpet, when Sir Robert came in at the glass-doors. That was the first time he spoke to me; but he had seen me at Timberdale Church the previous day. Papa and I and you walked over there: and a very hot day it was, I remember."

"That Sir Robert should take a liking to you, Anne, was only a matter of course; other people have done the same," I said, calling her "Anne" unconsciously, my thoughts back in the past. "But I don't understand why he should take a liking to me."

"Don't you," she returned. "I can tell you that he has taken it—a wonderful liking. Why, Johnny, if my little baby-girl were twenty years older, you would only need to ask and have her. I'm not sure but he'd offer her to you without asking."

We both laughed so, she and I, that Sir Robert looked down the table, inquiring what our mirth was. Anne answered that she would not forget to tell him later.

"So mind, Johnny, that you come to Bellwood as often as you please whenever you are staying at Crabb Cot. Robert and I would both like it."

And perhaps I may as well mention here that, although the busi-

ness which had brought Mr. Brandon to London was concluded, he did not go home. When that event would take place, or how long it would be, appeared to be hidden in the archives of the future. For a certain matter had arisen to detain him.

Mr. Brandon had a nephew in town, a young medical student, of whom you once heard him say that he was "going to the bad." By what we learnt now, the young fellow appeared to have gone to it; and Mr. Brandon's prolonged stay was connected with this.

"I shall see you into a train at Paddington, Johnny," he said to me, "and you must make your way home alone. For all I know, I may be kept here for weeks."

But Miss Deveen would not hear of this. "Mr. Brandon remains on for his own business, Johnny, and you shall remain for my pleasure," she said to me in her warm manner. "I had meant to ask Mr. Brandon to leave you behind him."

And that is how I was enabled to see the play played out between the ladies and the new rector. I did wonder which of them would win the prize; I'd not have betted upon Cattledon. It also caused me to see something of another play that was being played in London just then; not a comedy but a tragedy. A fatal tragedy, which I may tell of sometime.

II.

ALL unexpectedly a most distressing rumour set in; and though none knew whence it arose, a conviction of its truth took the parish by storm. Mr. Lake was about to be married! Distressing it was, and no mistake: for each individual lady had good cause to know that *she* was not the chosen bride, being unpleasantly conscious that Mr. Lake had not asked her to be.

Green-eyed jealousy seized upon the community. They were ready to rend one another's veils. The young ladies vowed it must be one or other of those two designing widows; Mrs. Jonas and Mrs. Herriker, on their parts, decided it was one of those minxes of girls. What with lady-like innuendos pitched at each other personally, and sharp hints levelled apparently at the air, all of which provoked retort, the true state of the case disclosed itself pretty clearly to the public—that neither widows nor maidens were being thought of by Mr. Lake.

And yet—that the parson had marriage in view seemed to be certain; the way in which he was furnishing his house proved it. No end of things were going into it—at least, if vigilant eyes might be believed—that could be of no use to a bachelor-parson. There must be a lady in the case—and Mr. Lake had not a sister.

With this apparent proof of what was in the wind, and with the conviction that not one of themselves had been solicited to share his hearth and home—as the widow Herriker poetically put it—the

world was at a nonplus ; though polite hostilities were not much less freely exchanged. Suddenly the general ill-feeling ceased. One and all metaphorically shook hands and made common cause together. A frightful conviction had set in—it must be Emma Topcroft.

Miss Cattledon was the first to scent the fox. Cattledon herself. She—but I had better tell it in order.

It was Monday morning, and we were at breakfast : Cattledon pouring out the coffee, and taking anxious glances upwards through the open window between whiles. What could be seen of the sky was blue enough, but clouds, some dark, some light, were passing rapidly over it.

“Are you fearing it will rain, Miss Cattledon ?”

“I am, Johnny Ludlow. I thought,” she added, turning to Miss Deveen, “of going after that chair this morning, if you have no objection, and do not want me.”

“Go by all means,” returned Miss Deveen. “It is time the chair went, Jemima, if it is to go at all. Take Johnny with you : he would like the expedition. As for myself, I have letters to write that will occupy me the whole of the morning.”

Miss Cattledon wished to buy an easy-chair that would be comfortable for an aged invalid : her sick aunt at Chelmsford. But, as Miss Cattledon's purse was not as large as her merits, she meant to get a second-hand chair : which are often just as good as new. Dr. Galliard, who knew all about invalid-chairs and everything else, advised her to go to a certain shop in Oxford Street, where they sold most kinds of furniture, old and new. So we agreed to go this same morning. Cattledon, however, would not miss the morning service ; trust her for that.

“It might do *you* no harm to attend for once, Johnny Ludlow.”

Thus admonished, I went over with her, and reaped the benefit of the young deacon's ministry. Mr. Lake did not make his appearance at all : quite an unusual omission. I don't think it pleased Cattledon.

“We had better start at once, Johnny Ludlow,” she said to me as we came out ; and her tone might have turned the very sweetest of cream to curds and whey. “Look at those clouds ! I believe it *is* going to rain.”

So we made our way to an omnibus, then on the point of starting, got in, and were set down at the shop in Oxford Street. Cattledon described what she wanted ; and the young man invited us to walk up stairs.

Dodging our way dexterously through the things that crowded the shop, and up the narrow staircase, we reached a room that seemed, at first sight, big enough to hold half the furniture in London.

“This way, ma'am,” said the young man who had marshalled us up. “Invalid-chairs,” he called out, turning us over to another young man, who came forward—and shot down stairs again himself.

Cattledon picked her way in and out amid the things, I following. Half-way down the room she stopped to admire a tall, inlaid cabinet, that looked very beautiful.

"I never come to these places without longing to be rich," she whispered to me with a sigh, as she walked on. "One of the pleasantest interludes in life, Johnny Ludlow, must be to have a good house to furnish and plenty of money to — — Dear me!"

The exceeding surprise of the exclamation following the break off, caused me to look round. We were passing a side opening, or wing of the room; a wing that seemed to be filled with bedsteads and bedding. Critically examining one of the largest of these identical bedsteads stood the Reverend William Lake and Emma Topcroft.

So entranced was Cattledon that she never moved hand or foot, simply stood still and gazed. They, absorbed in their business, did not see us. The parson seemed to be trying the strength of the iron, shaking it with his hand; Emma was poking and patting at the mattress.

"Good heavens!" faintly ejaculated Cattledon; and she looked as if about to faint.

"The washhand-stands are round this way, and the chests of drawers also," was called out at this juncture from some unknown region, and I knew the voice to be Mrs. Topcroft's. "You had better come if you have fixed upon the beds. The double stands look extremely convenient."

Cattledon turned back the way she had come, and stalked along, her head in the air. Straight down the stairs went she, without vouchsafing a word to the wondering attendant.

"But, madam, is there not anything I can show you?" he enquired, arresting her.

"No, young man, not anything. I made a mistake in coming here."

The young man looked at the other young man down in the shop, and tapped his finger on his forehead suggestively. They took her to be crazy.

"Barefaced effrontery!" I heard her ejaculate to herself: and I knew she did not allude to the young men. But never a word to me spoke she.

Peering about, on this side of the street and on that, she espied another furniture shop, and went into it. Here she found the chair she wanted; paid for it, and gave directions for it to be sent to Chelmsford.

That what we had witnessed could have but one meaning—the speedy marriage of Mr. Lake with Emma Topcroft—Cattledon looked upon as a dead certainty. Had an astrologer who foretells the future come forth to read the story differently, Cattledon would have turned a deaf ear. Mrs. Jonas happened to be sitting with Miss Deveen when we got home; and Cattledon, in the fulness of her outraged

heart, let out what she had seen. She had felt so sure of Mr. Lake!

Naturally, as Mrs. Jonas agreed, it could have but one meaning. She took it up accordingly, and hastened forth to tell it. Ere the sun went down, it was known from one end of the parish to the other that Emma Topcroft was to be Mrs. Lake.

"A crafty, wicked hussy!" cried a chorus of tongues. "She, with that other woman, her mother, to teach her, has cast her spells over the poor weak man, and he has been unable to escape!"

Of course it did seem like it. It continued to seem like it as the week went on. Never a day dawned but the parson and Emma went to town by an omnibus, looking at things in this mart, buying in that. It became known that they had chosen the carpets: Brussels for the sitting-rooms, colour green; drugget for the bed-chambers, Turkey pattern: Mrs. Jonas fished it out. How that impudent girl could have the face to go with him upon such errands, the parish could not understand. It's true Mrs. Topcroft always made one of the party, but what of that?

Could anything be done? Any means devised to arrest the heresy and save him from his dreadful fate? Sitting nose and knees together at one another's houses, their cherished work all thrown aside, the ladies congregated daily to debate the question. They did not quite see their way clear to warn the parson that Emma was neither more nor less than a Mephistophiles in petticoats. They would have assured herself of the fact with the greatest pleasure had that been of any use. How sly he was, too—quite unworthy of his cloth! While making believe to be a poor man, he must have been putting by a nice nest-egg; else how could he buy all that furniture?"

Soon another phase of the affair set in: one that puzzled them exceedingly. It came about through an ebullition of temper.

Mrs. Jonas had occasion to call upon the rector one afternoon, concerning some trouble that turned up in the parish: she being a district visitor and presiding at the mothers' meetings. Mr. Lake was not at home. Emma sat in the parlour alone stitching away at new table-cloths and sheets.

"He and mamma went out together after dinner," said Emma, leaving her work to hand a chair to Mrs. Jonas. "I should not wonder if they are gone to the house. The carpets were to be laid down to-day."

She looked full at Mrs. Jonas as she said it, never blushing, never faltering. What with the bold avowal, what with the sight of the sheets and the table linen, and what with the wretched condition of affairs, the disappointment at heart, the discomfort altogether, Mrs. Jonas lost her temper.

"How dare you stand there with a bold face and acknowledge such a thing to me, you unmaidenly girl?" cried the widow, her anger bubbling over as she dashed away the offered chair. "The

mischievous you are doing poor Mr. Lake is enough, without boasting of it."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Emma, opening her eyes wide, and feeling more inclined to laugh than to cry, for her mood was ever sunny, "what *am* I doing to him?"

How Mrs. Jonas spoke out all that was in her mind, she could never afterwards recall. Emma Topcroft, gazing and listening, could not remain ignorant of her supposed fault now; and she burst into a fit of laughter. Mrs. Jonas longed to box her ears. She regarded it as the very incarnation of impudence.

"Marry me! *Me!* Mr. Lake! My goodness!—what *can* have put such a thing into all your heads?" cried Emma, in a rapture of mirth. "Why, he is forty-five if he's a day! He'd not think of me: he couldn't. He came here when I was a little child: he does not look upon me as much else yet. Well, I never!"

And the words came out in so impromptu a fashion, the surprise was so honestly genuine, that Mrs. Jonas saw there must be a mistake somewhere. She took the rejected chair then, her fears relieved, her tone softened, and began casting matters about in her mind; still not seeing any way out of them.

"Is it your mother he is going to marry?" cried she, the lame solution presenting itself to her thoughts, and speaking it out on the spur of the moment. It was Emma's turn to be vexed now.

"Oh, Mrs. Jonas, how can you!" she cried with spirit. "My poor old mother!" And somehow Mrs. Jonas felt humiliated, and bit her lips in vexation at having spoken at all.

"He evidently *is* going to be married," she urged presently, returning to the charge.

"He is not going to marry me," said Emma, threading her needle. "Or to marry my mother either. I can say no more than that."

"You have been going to London with him to choose some furniture: bedsteads, and carpets and things," contended Mrs. Jonas.

"Mamma has gone with him to choose it all: Mr. Lake would have got finely taken in, with his inexperience. As to me, I wanted to go too, and they let me. They said it would be as well that young eyes should see as well as theirs, especially the colours of the carpets and the patterns of the crockery-ware."

"What a misapprehension it has been!" gasped Mrs. Jonas.

"Quite so—if you mean about me," agreed Emma. "I like Mr. Lake very much; I respect him above everybody in the world; but for anything else—such a notion never entered my head: and I am sure it would not enter his."

Mrs. Jonas, bewildered, but intensely relieved, wished Emma good afternoon civilly, and went away to enlighten the world. A reaction set in: hopes rose again to fever heat. If it was neither Emma Top-

croft nor her mother, why it must be somebody else, argued the ladies, old and young, and perhaps she was not chosen yet: and the next day they were running about the parish more than ever.

III.

SEATED in her drawing-room, in her own particular elbow-chair, in the twilight of the summer's evening, was Miss Deveen. Near to her, telling a history, his voice low, his conscious face slightly flushed, sat the Rector of St. Matthew's. The scent from the garden flowers came pleasantly in at the open window; the moon, high in the heavens, was tinting the trees with her silvery light. One might have taken them for two lovers, sitting there to exchange vows, and going in for romance.

Miss Deveen was at home alone. I was escorting that other estimable lady to a "penny reading" in the adjoining district, St. Jude's, at which the clergy of the neighbourhood were expected to gather in full force, including the Rector of St. Matthew's. It was a special reading, sixpence admission, got up for the benefit of St. Jude's vestry fire-stove, which wanted replacing with a new one. Our parish, including Cattledon, took up the cause with zeal, and would not have missed the reading for the world. We flocked to it in numbers.

Disappointment was in store for some of us, however, for the Rector of St. Matthew's did not appear. He called, instead, on Miss Deveen, confessing that he had hoped to find her alone, and to get half an hour's conversation with her: he had been wishing for it for some time, as he had a tale to tell.

It was a tale of love. Miss Deveen, listening to it in the soft twilight, could but admire the man's constancy of heart and his marvellous patience.

In the West of England, where he had been curate before coming to London, he had been very intimate with the Gibson family—the medical people of the place. The two brothers were in partnership, James and Edward Gibson. Their father had retired upon a bare competence, for village doctors don't often make fortunes, leaving the practice to these two sons. The rest of his sons and daughters were out in the world—Mrs. Topcroft was one of them. William Lake's father had been the incumbent of this parish, and the Lakes and the Gibsons were ever close friends. The incumbent died; another parson was appointed to the living; and subsequently William Lake became the new parson's curate, upon the enjoyable stipend of fifty pounds a year. How ridiculously improvident it was of the curate and Emily Gibson to fall in love with one another, wisdom could testify. They did; and there was an end of it, and went in for all kinds of rose-coloured visions after the fashion of such

like poor mortals in this lower world. And when he was appointed to the curacy of St. Matthew's in London, upon a whole one hundred pounds a year, these two people thought Dame Fortune was opening her favours upon them. They plighted their troth solemnly, and exchanged broken sixpences.

Mr. Lake was thirty-one years of age then, and Emily was nineteen. He counted forty-five now, and she thirty-three. Thirty-three ! Daisy Dutton would have tossed her little impertinent head, and classed Miss Gibson with the old ladies at the Alms Houses, who were verging on ninety.

Fourteen summers had drifted by since that troth-plighting ; and the lovers had been living—well, not exactly upon hope, for hope seemed to have died out completely ; and certainly not upon love, for they did not meet : better say, upon disappointment. Emily, the eldest daughter of the younger of the two brothers, was but one of several children, and her father had no fortune to give her. She kept the house, her mother being dead, and saw to the younger children, patiently training and teaching them. And any chance of brighter prospects appeared to be so very hopeless, that she had long ago ceased to look for it.

As to William Lake, coming up to London all cock-a-hoop with his rise in life, he soon found realization not answer to expectation. He found that a hundred a year in that expensive metropolis, did not go so very much further than his fifty pounds went in the cheap and remote village. Whether he and Emily had indulged a hope of setting up housekeeping on the hundred a year, they best knew ; it might be good in theory, it was not to be accomplished in practice. It's true that money went further in those days than it goes in these ; still, without taking into calculation future incidental expenses that marriage might bring in its train, they were not silly enough to risk it. For, contingencies arise in most new households, as the world knows ; the kitchen chimney may fall down some windy morning, and it costs money to build it up again.

When William Lake had been five years at St. Matthew's, and found he remained just as he was, making both ends meet upon the pay, and saw no vista of being anywhere else to the end, or of gaining more, he wrote to release Emily from her engagement. The heartache at this was great on both sides, not to be got over lightly. Emily did not rebel ; did not remonstrate. A sensible, good, self-enduring girl, she would not for the world have crossed him, or added to his care ; if he thought it right that they should no longer be bound to one another, it was not for her to think differently. So the plighted troth was recalled and the broken sixpences were despatched back again. Speaking in theory, that is, you understand : practically, I don't in the least know whether the sixpences were returned or kept. It must have been a farce altogether, take it at the best : for they had just gone on silently caring for each other ;

patiently bearing—perhaps in a corner of their hearts even slightly hoping—all through these later years.

Miss Deveen drew a deep breath as the rector's voice died away in the stillness of the room. What a number of these long-enduring, silently-borne cases the world could tell of, and how deeply she pitied them, was very present to her then.

"You are not affronted at my disclosing all this so fully, Miss Deveen?" he asked, misled by her silence. "I wished to ——"

"Affronted!" she interposed. "Nay, how could I be? I am lost in the deep sympathy I feel—with you and with Emily Gibson. What a trial it has been!—how hopeless it must have appeared. You will marry now."

"Yes. I could not bring myself to disclose this abroad prematurely," he added; "though perhaps I ought to have done it before beginning to furnish the house. I find that some of my friends, suspecting something from that fact, have been wondering whether I was thinking of Emma Topcroft. Though indeed I feel quite ashamed to repeat to you any idea that is so obviously absurd, poor little girl!"

Miss Deveen burst out laughing. "How did you hear that?" she asked.

"From Emma herself. She heard of it from—from—Mrs. Jonas, I think it was—and repeated it to me, and to her mother, in the highest state of glee. To Emma, it seemed only fun: she is young and thoughtless."

"I conclude Emma has known of your engagement?"

"Only lately. Mrs. Topcroft knew of it from the beginning: Emily is her niece. She knew also that I released Emily from the engagement years ago, and she thought I did rightly, my future being so hopeless. But how very silly people must be to suppose I could think of that child Emma! I must set them right."

"Never you mind the people," cried Miss Deveen. "Don't set them right until you feel quite inclined to do it. As to that, I believe Emma has done it already. How long is it that you and Emily have waited for one another?"

"Fourteen years."

"Fourteen years! It seems like a lifetime. Do not let another day go on, Mr. Lake; marry at once."

"That was one of the points on which I wished to ask your opinion," he rejoined, his tone taking a hesitating turn, his face shrinking from the moonlight. "Do you think it would be wrong of me to marry—almost directly? Would it be at all unseemly?"

"Wrong? Unseemly?" cried Miss Deveen. "In what way?"

"I hardly know. It may appear to the parish so very hurried. And it is but a short time since my kind rector died."

"Never you mind the parish," reiterated Miss Deveen. "The parish would fight at your marriage, though it were put off for a

twelvemonth; be sure of that. As to Mr. Selwyn, he was no relative of yours. Surely you have waited long enough! Were I your promised wife, sir, I'd not have you at all unless you married me to-morrow morning."

They both laughed a little. "Why should the parish fight at my marriage, Miss Deveen?" he suddenly asked.

"Why?" she repeated; thinking how entirely void of conceit he was, how unconscious he had been all along in his deprecating modesty. "Oh, people always grumble at everything, you know. If you were to remain single, they would say you ought to marry; and if you marry, they'll think you might as well have remained single. *Don't* trouble your head about the parish, and don't tell anybody a syllable beforehand if you'd rather not. *I* shouldn't."

"You have been so very kind to me always, Miss Deveen, and I have felt more grateful than I can say. I hope—I hope you will like my wife. I hope you will allow me to bring her here, and introduce her to you."

"I like her already," said Miss Deveen. "As to your bringing her here, if she lived near enough you should both come here to your wedding-breakfast. What a probation it has been!"

The tears stood in his grey eyes. "Yes, it has been that; a trial hardly to be imagined. I don't think we quite lost heart, either she or I. Not that we have ever looked to so bright an ending as this; but we knew that God saw all things, and we were content to leave ourselves in His hands."

"I am sure that she is good and estimable! One to be loved."

"Indeed she is. Few are like her."

"Have you never met—all these fourteen years?"

"Yes; three or four times. When I have been able to take a holiday I have gone down there to my old rector; he was always glad to see me. It has not been often, as you know," he added. "Mr. Selwyn could not spare me."

"I know," said Miss Deveen. "He took all the holidays, and you all the work."

"He and his family seemed to need them," spoke the clergyman from his unselfish heart. "Latterly, when Emily and I have met, we have only allowed it to be as strangers."

"Not quite as strangers, surely!"

"No, no; I used the word thoughtlessly. I ought to have said as friends."

"Will you pardon me for the question I am about to ask you, and not attribute it to impertinent curiosity?" resumed Miss Deveen. "How have you found the money to furnish your house? Or are you doing it on credit?"

His whole face lighted up with smiles. "The money is Emily's, dear Miss Deveen. Her father, Edward Gibson, sent me his cheque for three hundred pounds, saying it was all he should be able

to do for her, but he hoped it might be enough for the furniture."

Miss Deveen took his hands in hers as he rose to leave. "I wish you both all the happiness that the world can give," she said, in her earnest tones. "And I think—I feel sure—Heaven's blessing will rest upon you."

We turned out from the penny-reading like bees from a hive, openly wondering what could have become of Mr. Lake. Mrs. Jonas hoped his head was not splitting—she had seen him talking to Miss Cattledon long enough in the afternoon in that hot King's Road to bring on a sun-stroke. Upon which Cattledon retorted that the ginger-cordial might have disagreed with him. With the clearing up as to Emma Topcroft, these slight amenities had recommenced.

Miss Deveen sat reading by lamp-light when we got home. Taking off her spectacles, she began asking us about the penny-reading; but never a hint gave she that she had had a visitor.

Close upon this Mr. Lake took a week's holiday, leaving that interesting young deacon as his substitute, and a brother rector to preach on the Sunday morning. Nobody could divine what on earth he had gone out for, as Mrs. Herriker put it, or what part of the world he had betaken himself to. Miss Deveen kept counsel; Mrs. Topcroft and Emma never opened their lips.

The frightful truth came out one morning, striking the parish all of a heap. They read it in the *Times*, amidst the marriages. "The Reverend William Lake, Rector of St. Matthew's, to Emily Mary, eldest daughter of Edward Gibson, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons." Indignation set in.

"I have heard of gay deceivers," gasped Miss Barlow, who was at the least as old as Cattledon, and sat in the churchwarden's pew at church, "but I never did hear of deceit such as this. And for a clergyman to be guilty of it!"

"I'm glad I sent him a doll," giggled Daisy Dutton. "I daresay it is a doll he has gone and married."

This was said in the porch, after morning prayers. While they were all at it, talking as fast as tongues could go, Emma Topcroft chanced to pass. They pounced upon her forthwith.

"Married! Oh yes, of course he is married; and they are coming home on Saturday," said Emma, in response.

"Is she a doll?" cried Daisy.

"She is about the nicest girl you ever saw," returned Emma; "though of course not much of a girl now; and they have waited for one another fourteen years."

Fourteen years! Thoughts went back, in mortification, to slippers and cushions. Mrs. Jonas cast regrets to her ginger-cordial.

"Of course he has a right to be engaged—and to have slyly

kept it to himself, making believe he was a free man : but to go off surreptitiously to his wedding without a word to anybody !—I don't know what *he* may call it," panted Mrs. Herriker, in virtuous indignation, "*I* call it conduct unbefitting a gentleman. He could have done no less had he been going to his hanging."

"He would have liked to speak, I think, but could not get up courage for it ; he is the shyest man," cried Emma. "But he did not go off surreptitiously : some people knew of it. Miss Deveen knew—and Dr. Galliard knew—and we knew—and I feel nearly sure Mr. Chisholm knew, he simpered so the other day when he called for the books. I daresay Johnny Ludlow knew."

All of which was so much martyrdom to Jemima Cattledon, listening with a face of vinegar. Miss Deveen !—and Johnny Ludlow !—and those Topcrofts !—while *she* had been kept in the dark ! She jerked up her skirts to cross the wet road, inwardly vowing never to put faith in surpliced man again.

We went to church on Sunday morning to the sound of the ting-tang. Mr. Lake, looking calm and cool as usual, was stepping into the reading-desk : in the rector's pew sat a quiet-looking and quietly dressed young lady with what Miss Deveen called, then and afterwards, a sweet face. Daisy Dutton took a violent fancy to her at first-sight : truth to say, so did I.

Our parish—the small knot of week-day church-goers in it—could not get over it at all. Moreover, just at this time they lost Mr. Chisholm, whose year was up. Some of them "went over" to St. Jude's in a body ; that church having recently set up daily services, and a most desirable new curate who could "intone." "As if we would attend that slow old St. Matthew's now, to hear that slow old parson Lake !" cried Mrs. Herriker, craning her neck disparagingly.

The disparagement did not affect William Lake. He proved as indefatigable as rector as he had been as curate, earning the golden opinions he deserved. And he and his wife were happy.

But he would persist in declaring that all the good which had come to him was owing to me ; that but for my visit to London at that critical time, Sir Robert Tenby would never have heard there was such a man as himself in the world.

"It is true, Johnny," said Miss Deveen. "But you were only the humble instrument in the hand of God."

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



A DAY WITH THE SEALS.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD.



SHETLAND CORN MILL.

YOU have already accompanied me to Shetland, reader. Bear with me whilst I endeavour briefly to place before you the record of a day that falls to the experience of few visitors to that northern archipelago. There are spots in the island whose resources are sufficiently unknown not to be sought by many explorers: sufficiently remote to keep even the few from courting their hidden mysteries.

Early one morning we started in a species of dog-cart for a drive up or down the country—as the fancy of the traveller may consider it. It would puzzle a wise man—or a “wise woman” either—to say which is which in Shetland. Whatever my destination, it invariably seemed to me uphill all the way there, and uphill all the way back. Memory seems to accuse me of having already made this remark, but that only proves the strength and reality of the impression. In point of fact the roads are a series of undulations, sometimes gracefully waving, at others steep and abrupt, the rise and fall being pretty equally divided.

A drive of some twenty-four miles lay between us and Dunrossness; and as they do not urge their cattle in Shetland any more than they hurry themselves, we started betimes in the morning. The vehicle was half dog-cart, half gig, but, being in Shetland, we must not forget to call it a machine. Never was machine better laden. At length it positively refused to take in more: it, the machine, not the driver. No Shetlander would submit to the humility of the neuter pronoun. They have no violets to set them a good example, and perhaps we must not be too hard upon them for not rising above their level: for shining only according to their lights.

There were four travellers to begin with, for our landlady, Mrs. Sinclair, of Leog, accompanied us. We were to put up for a week at her mother's, and she was glad to make use of an opportunity that

fulfilled so many conditions ; or, in homely phrase, killed many birds with one stone. It afforded her a week's change from the monotony of Lerwick, and holiday from her daily round of household duties ; it would benefit her health ; it gave her the not very frequent pleasure of a few days spent with her mother ; and it enabled her to superintend the domestic arrangements of the mother's establishment during the period of our sojourn.

Beyond and above the four travellers, already somewhat of a load for the little Shetland horse—it has aforetime been remarked that in Shetland they call their ponies horses, and in Orkney their horses ponies—we had our guns ; a hamper containing a good store of provisions towards a week's consumption, necessary precaution in the barren land of our destination ; two small portmanteaus ; a mysterious box belonging to our hostess, generally supposed to contain presents for the good folk at Boddam, and sundry additions for our own table ; and various other freight, such as cartridge-bags, great-coats, &c. The horse, however, bravely started, and we made steady, though quiet progress.

It was eight o'clock and a gloomy morning—in the words of the ancient watchman. One of us had a head racking with pain—the result of constitution, suspicious reader, not untimely vigils—but the effort to start had to be made, or the expedition abandoned—an alternative not to be thought of. The first half of the journey, as far as Sand Lodge and the ironworks, was familiar to me. The same winding, twisting, undulating roads, with here and there a hole to trap the unwary : the isolated cottages, whose inmates suggested living examples of stagnation. The hills rising about us in quiet, gloomy repose, covered with furze, their outlines unbroken by a single tree : no shade under which to shelter from the midday sun ; white patches representing the inevitable flocks of geese, who meet and have pitched battles and retire, resting upon their laurels and ruffled feathers—quite as clever as the Zulus in their organization, and far more respectable in their appearance. Now and again, glimpses of the shining, shimmering sea ; many a jutting rock and sandy bank rendered familiar by our boating expeditions.

And here, whilst alluding to geese, a slight anecdote may be recorded that occurred just before my last visit to Shetland, proving that the genus is not altogether confined to the animal kingdom, and that if Darwin had only taken this view of his case, he might not have floundered so hopelessly into the ridiculous.

A commercial traveller visiting Shetland on business thoughts intent, rashly ventured to vary work with pleasure, and embarked on a day's sport, in company with a number of friends, one or two of whom were of a lively turn of mind. Scouring the deserted country, they came upon a flock of these perambulating birds. "Wild geese !" exclaimed the commercial traveller, trembling with excitement, and seeing sport in anticipation.

"Doubtless," replied a wag, who knew better. "*Brent* geese, I firmly believe, scarce and valuable; rare birds for stuffing."

"I must have one of them," returned our traveller, pale with emotion. "You fellows keep in the background whilst I step out."

"By all means," cried one. "Take a long aim and a sure aim; mark the biggest bird, and be dead on him."

The traveller stepped out on tiptoe, though the birds were half a mile away. The rest of the party remained behind, with difficulty suppressing loud laughter. The traveller made way, and by-and-by a report was heard, and a bird lay prone upon the field of slaughter. The remainder of the flock scattered in wild confusion. The successful sportsman, discarding his toes for his heels, flew towards his prize.



STREET IN LERWICK.

We have many of us seen, at a country fair, those machines so constructed that, the moment the centre of the target is hit by the successful aimer, up springs an apparition in the shape of some hideous goblin or vampire. So it was in this case. No sooner had the smoke cleared from the gun than out sprang a goblin in the shape of a Shetland wife, from a cottage hard by, and with wings to which fury lent their aid, bore down upon the sportsman. He, amazed at his prowess, was gazing, as in a trance of delight, at the beautiful creature. Somehow it seemed to him that for a wild goose its aspect was strangely tame and familiar.

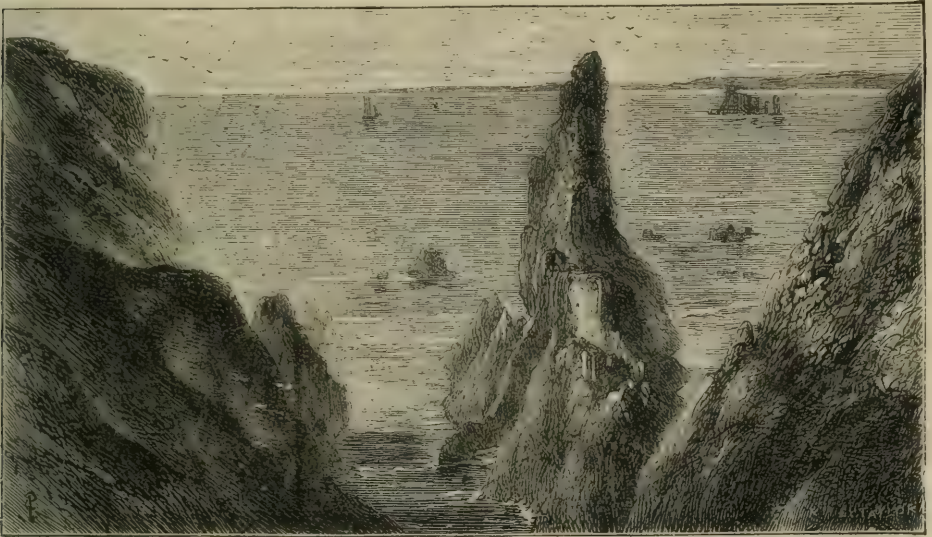
The woman was the owner of the flock, and of course her best bird had been sacrificed. She demanded compensation. Nothing less than a pound would repay her.

"A pound, woman! and for a stupid old goose!" cried the startled sportsman, whose eyes were now opened to the truth. "A pound! you must be mad, or dreaming!"

Mad or dreaming, she claimed a pound, and would take nothing less. As for the goose being stupid, she could not tell : she knew nothing about that ; but it was the best sitter of the flock, and as such was cheap at a pound. She was a loser even at that ; anyway she would take no less.

The contention waxed loud and long, and the traveller bid upwards from one shilling to five. He would go no higher, whilst the obdurate woman would not abate one jot of her demand.

It ended at last in the unfortunate sportsman declaring that he would pay *nothing*, whilst the virago, shaking her fist in the air, vowed she would get the better of him yet, and they should see what the morrow would bring forth. Each went his way ; and the dead goose possibly fell a prey to the ravens—those lawyers of the air, so to



SHETLAND ROCKS.

say, who, when folk fall out, are kind enough to step in and smooth matters over by appropriating to themselves the bone of contention.

The next morning, like an outraged and avenging Nemesis, the late owner of the bird made a triumphant entry into Lerwick, and cited her complaint and her claim before the sheriff. The latter, after a moment's consideration, being a man of peace, sent a private message to the commercial traveller, advising him to pay the money, otherwise he would be detained another week in Shetland, which, in the end, would cost him much more than the present claim. Thus driven into a corner, the unhappy man consented to satisfy the unjust demand ; and when the woman boldly appeared to receive her own, threw her a sovereign.

"No ! no !" said this financier in petticoats, "you don't think I'm coming all this way, wasting my time for nothing. You'll just pay me fifteen shillings for a machine to take me back again, or I don't stir from the spot."

And it was paid. So that before he had done, his shot at a "wild" goose had cost him £1 15s., though there had been nothing wild about the matter but the chase itself, and, probably, the humour in which the unfortunate victim quitted the shores of Shetland.

To return. At a half-way house we stayed awhile, to give the horse a rest, as well as ourselves. Here the good people made a decoction of strong tea, which, administered by the kindly hands of Mrs. Sinclair, presently had the desired effect. We had scarcely proceeded half an hour on our journey, when all traces of headache cleared away like mist before the sun. One moment Purgatory, the next Paradise. So much for Shetland tea. They may have a pernicious way of making it, already alluded to in a previous paper, but want of strength is not one of its absent properties. Whatever virtues or vices the leaf may contain are bound to yield themselves up to the process.

Towards four o'clock we reached Boddam, in Dunrossness, a small settlement consisting of two houses, one of which was the post and telegraph office, the other in the occupation of Mrs. Laurence, our hostess for the week. Mrs. Laurence had been established there many a long year, was looked up to and consulted by the people round about; kept the general shop, which her goodness of heart prevented from being anything but a loss to her, and where she sold every conceivable article, from patent medicines for the relief of the body, to tracts for the healing of the soul. How far each fulfilled its destiny I never stayed to enquire, but sure I am that he who goes in largely for the one had best not neglect the other also. Nor did Mrs. Laurence despise the more wholesome condiments of life, such as tea, sugar, flour, and other necessities, that go so far to form the sum-total of human happiness. On such trifles, light as air, does the weal or woe of this sublunary existence for the most part depend.

It was a quaint little place, and I felt, as I made my acquaintance with my quarters, that, cavalierly as I had once looked upon Lerwick we had left a palace behind us. And it is certain that anyone going to Shetland, and not staying at the hotel, cannot do better than write or telegraph to Mrs. Sinclair, of Leog, Lerwick, and rank themselves especially fortunate if she can take them in. The only doctor the neighbourhood could boast now lodged with Mrs. Laurence. G. and I were to share his sitting-room, and must make the most and the best of the one unoccupied bed-chamber. It was the largest room in the house, which was some comfort, though not very much. One bed was out of sight, in a recess in the wall, small and narrow; once in, you felt as if you had got into a good-sized coffin, in which there was just room to turn round uncomfortably. Perhaps it might be likened to a berth in a ship—an unendurable state of things anywhere but at sea, and under conditions in which for the first half-hour you are afraid you will die, and for the next half-hour you are afraid you will *not* die. The voice, issuing from that recess at

Boddam, had a muffled, far-off sound, as though it came from another world.

The room was in possession of two distinct smells: strong, stale, overpowering peat smoke, which almost choked us: and the smell of a doctor's laboratory; so that we were now and then seized with a spasmodic gasping for breath that baffled the doctor's skill, whilst it drove him half wild with delight at what he looked upon as the discovery of a new disease. He even prepared and half wrote a treatise thereupon, when an accident, to be recorded in its place, opened his eyes to the truth, explained the wonder, and scattered his half-written treatise to the surrounding population in the shape of wrappings for physic bottles.

Our rooms were at the top of an almost perpendicular staircase, which threatened every time we went down to precipitate us quickly to the bottom. We could easily touch the ceiling of our room, but less easily stand upright in it, whilst the small, low windows admitted but little daylight. I one day rashly put my head out, to watch Kirstie's manœuvres in saddling the doctor's horse—as Peepy Jellyby inserted his through the area railings; and it required the combined efforts of the establishment to get it back again, raising a bump here and depressing another there, until my head undulated like the Shetland hills, and would have delighted any phrenologist at hand to take observations. Kirstie, indeed, though she had never read "Bleak House," offered to stand outside and receive my body as it descended; but there was a wicked twinkle in her eye, warning that she meant mischief, and not wishing to go back to Lerwick in fragments, I protested against the experiment.

Kirstie was the character of the house; a born original; at once the right hand and the plague and despair of Mrs. Laurence's life. She could do everything and anything—and upon occasion she could do nothing. There was power in the woman's steel-grey glittering eyes and square-cut forehead, showing a disposition that could be kindly or the opposite according to her fancy. She had taken a liking to the doctor, and would do anything in the world to serve him, even to getting up in the middle of the night to saddle his horse; but Mrs. Laurence had had people staying with her for whom Kirstie would move neither hand nor foot, under bribe or protest. Indeed, she was too independent and exalted to be reached by either, and when it pleased her, disdained alike filthy lucre and the most potent threats and denunciations. Happily for us we fell at once into her good graces, where we remained, and Kirstie was indefatigable in her endeavours to make us comfortable.

She could not make the room more lofty, or give me a bed where any air reached me; she could not conjure away the suffocating smells; but what she could do in all other ways, she did willingly, spicing her actions with an odd, quaint saying, or a witty remark worth a large amount of discomfort to hear. Mrs. Laurence, too, was so kind and

motherly in her ways and wishes, supplying our necessities to the utmost of her power, and making us welcome with so much earnestness, that we were rendered more than contented. For it was not everyone she would receive into her house, and to anyone it was a favour granted. Often I would go into the kitchen, the most comfortable room in the place, and watch her, in her arm-chair by the fire, superintending the roasting of a bird, or the turning of a scone, her brain the while busy in giving me anecdotes of her life, and recollections of half a century and more.

Every few minutes somebody would come into the adjoining shop, and she would hobble across to attend to her customer; then, returning to her seat, would take up the thread of her narrative where



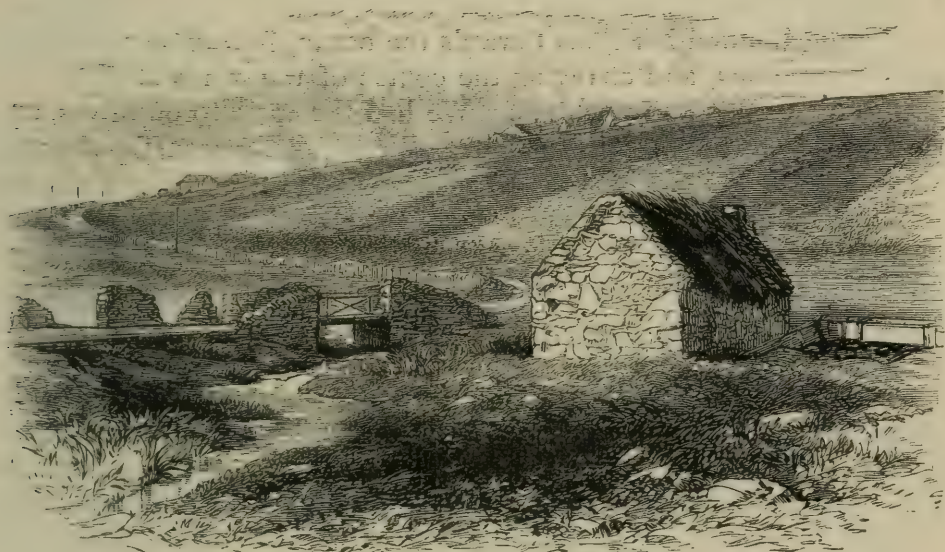
SCALLOWAY, THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF SHETLAND.

she had laid it down. She had been lame for many a long year now, and getting about was a trouble to her.

One of our chief reasons for coming to Dunrossness being to have a day's seal shooting, we made arrangements that night for an expedition on the morrow. The morning rose bright and warm; a blue, cloudless sky; everything that could be desired in the way of weather. Not a breath of air was stirring. We started betimes and walked over to the bay, where Mr. M. and his son and their boat awaited us. The long road was white and hot, and led past sand-hills, where the rabbits were playing at hide-and-seek, scampering into their holes as their sharp ears caught the sound of our steps and voices in the still air. But their fears were groundless; we had other game in view, and kept to the road, leaving the downs and the rabbits for another time.

We were out upon the water before long, and rowing silently towards the island; where, with the help of a glass, we had discovered the

seals high and dry upon the rocks, basking in the sun. The scene was beautiful indeed : one of those pictures that take hold of the imagination and remain there for ever. The blue transparent water, so often wildly raging, was to-day calm and quiet as a lake. It sparkled with myriads of sun flashes, that waved and danced on the ripples like things of life, as if in very phrensy of joy at this strange perfection of climate and nature. The sky above was blue and brilliant as the water below : no cloud was visible. To our right the sea ran up into the land, forming the bay of Quendale, and under the hills stood out its lonely grey mansion. To our left was the grand headland of Sumburgh, crowned with its white lighthouse, the first sight of Shetland that greets the approaching traveller from the south.



CORN MILL AT SCALLOWAY.

Under the shadow of the hill were the ruins of Jarlshof, so celebrated by Scott by the romantic use he has made of them in the *Pirate*. To the left, before us, stretched the ocean, the small seal island lying directly in our path ; while the magnificent Fitful Head lay just beyond, gloomy, frowning, majestic, age after age indifferent to and defying the mighty winds and the furious lashings of the north sea.

What recollections the very word conjured up ! Of days gone by —halcyon days to their generation, when Scott was rousing the world with his wonderful creations, and the *Pirate* so distinctly brought the then far off islands of Shetland to his readers' ken. At once the whole string of characters rose up before one's mental vision : the old Udaller, hot-tempered but generous ; Minna and Brenda Troil, those red and white roses amongst sisters in the world of fiction ; the adventurous Cleveland, and the brave, lovable Mordaunt ; the sentimental Claud Halcro ; the contemptible Triptolemus Yel-

lowley, and his sister, who certainly was not a rose either red or white, in fiction or reality : and last and most vivid of all, the grand Norna. But to-day the Fittful Head looked too calm and peaceful for Norna's typical home : it was as though her spirit, at rest, had ceased to haunt the spot, and left it to everlasting repose. More in character with her memory would have been lowering clouds, and raging storm, and surging waves, lashing themselves from fury to fury and joining their roar to the wild clang of the sea-gull, and the low, swift flight of the cruel-looking cormorant. Then one might have seen in imagination the figure of Norna on the very edge of that gigantic precipice, her garments fluttering wildly, her long hair streaming to the winds, her hands uplifted, whilst, regardless of storm and tempest, of danger from that foothold where other man or woman had never trod, she extended her arms towards the ocean, muttering her spells and incantations, and changing the course of the winds at will.

To-day all this had vanished. We had the water to ourselves, and shot on quietly as with muffled oars. We kept away from the sleeping seals, went round the island, and made for the further shore, lest the slightest sound should disturb them. Once or twice a gull flew across our path, wondering whether our intentions were honourable, or boded ill to his kind. But we gave him scant notice, and under the pilotage of M. and his son, who took the oars, made silent and rapid progress.

At length we shot our boat into a narrow little creek, between the rocks, ran it aground, and pulled it high and dry above the water. It would not do, on this desert island, to get back and find the boat had drifted out to sea. Then, taking up our guns, we quietly commenced to walk across the island, to where the seals were lying. It was a wild, barren, solitary spot, abandoned to the multitude of sea-fowl that, undisturbed, here build their nests : and we four represented the whole world of mankind for the time being.

When we neared the further shore on which the seals were lying, G. and I went down upon hands and knees, whilst M. and his son stealthily made for the ruin of an old stone hut, that might have existed in the days of Norna herself, and served her and her pacolet for a refuge when the fancy seized her to sleep beneath a roof. But the roof had long since disappeared : nothing remained but the bare walls of gray granite stones. Behind this shelter we watched M. and his son rise cautiously from their hands and knees and look round. Then they signed to us that all was right, and we continued our crawling process, dragging the guns with us.

It was rising ground, and the summit of the slope lay between us and the seals. At length, when near the top, getting up from our hands, but keeping our knees, we looked out. Within forty yards of us five or six of the funny creatures were resting on the very edge of the rocks, so that one movement would instantly plunge them into the water out of sight and danger. This was cunning on their part,

but not what we wanted. There would be no chance of a second shot at them; the first must do the work, if work was done.

M. motioned to us not to be too dilatory: the slightest warning and away they would plunge, our chance with them. In his anxiety that we should have some sport, he was far more excited than we were. I half repented not having given up my gun to him, and become a mere spectator of the fun.

We, indeed, were the essence of coolness, as we gazed over the slope at the seals, for a few moments' enjoyment, and then quietly prepared to fire.

"I will count three," whispered G. "Then both fire together."

As he spoke, one of the seals seemed roused to a sense of danger, lifted its head, and turned it rapidly from side to side. M. from his outpost was going frantic: this dilatoriness was unpardonable. He could not understand the refined luxury of delay in enjoyment.

"Now for it," said G. "One—two—three!"

I was a second behind time, and whether I did damage remained unknown; probably, almost certainly, not. Before the echoes could reach the shore and bound from one hollow to another, the seals plunged into the water and dived. We looked: the rocks were bare. The seal—we had both aimed at the same—had not been killed, but as certainly it had been wounded.

To wound and not kill was more unsatisfactory than to have missed altogether. M. was more disappointed for our sakes than we were for our own: whilst his son, at that youthful age which judges only by the measure of success, and metes out its approval according to the proportion of its enthusiasm, was inclined to look upon us with a certain amount of contempt; until, later on, successful and far more difficult shots at birds reinstated us in his good opinion.

We reached the rocks where the seals had lately been basking. For the moment all traces of them had disappeared, save a thin, oily streak in the water that told its own sad tale. Then, here and there, a little dark head popped up, and two bright, frightened eyes looked around, saw the enemy, and plunged into the depths again. We might have waited and taken another shot in the water, but we spared them. Had we rowed about the spot for some time we might probably have picked up the body of the wounded seal, which, heavily hit, could not live long. But we gave up the idea, and walked across the island over the rocks, and through the hollows and inequalities, startling the birds, and no longer hushing our voices now that all need for silence was at an end.

I am not sure that this stroll about the island was not the pleasantest part of the whole thing; so wild was the scene, so free, bracing, and enjoyable; so utterly unfettered and unrestrained one felt in this remote solitude. The sea beat at the foot of the rocks with a calm, dreamy sound rare in these latitudes; the air was hot, glowing, and exhilarating to the last degree. A magnificent oyster-catcher flew

upwards, and a shot brought him down to earth with a last cry, and we gathered him up carefully as a grand specimen for mounting. Then we took a short rest upon the rocks, and watched the endless sun-flashes upon the water, and despatched a frugal luncheon. Making way back to the little creek, the boat, still high and dry upon the sand, was a goodly sight. We shot her into the water, and jumped in, and, taking the oars by turns, rowed round the Fitful Head.



THE GIANT'S LEG, SHETLAND.

Anyone standing on the summit might trace, far down, the outlines of Scalloway, the ancient capital of Shetland, so picturesquely situated, with its ruined castle, built by cruel Patrick Stewart, its smiling voes, its gently undulating hills, its cultivated slopes, its great stretches of peat fields, black and sombre, where the girls and the old women, with their "kishies" upon their backs, go to fill them with fuel, returning home in solitude or in bands, chatting and knitting as they walk.

Under the rocks the magnificence of the headland was almost

appalling, high and wide, of colossal proportions, before which one grew dumb. A perfect forest of rocks sprang around out of the water, in and out of which we steered our course, whilst our voices sounded as if coming from the "long-drawn aisles" of some vast cathedral. In one part an immense wall of rock interposed between the mainland and the sea, as if jealously guarding it from the angry moods of the ocean. Here myriads of wild birds make their home, seldom molested by man, secure and happy: for few and rare are the visitors to Shetland who have the chance of rounding the Fitful Head. It is too remote to be attempted with impunity: boats are not to be had: accommodation is too limited to be found without previous arrangement, which is difficult to make; so much so that adventurous pedestrians going down without warning may find, at the end of their long journey, no place of rest for their head, and nothing for it but a trudge back to Lerwick. Then the chances of getting out upon the water depend upon wind and weather, more proverbially uncertain here than in most places. That year had seen no day so favourable for our purpose as this: it came, and went, and came not again: on no other day during that week could we have ventured out upon the water. It had been made for us, and left nothing to be desired—save the trophy we had left behind.



PEAT GATHERER RETURNING HOME.

Rowing back, we landed at a spot that would give us a shorter walk home. Climbing the steep, rugged rocks, we bade the remaining occupants of the boat farewell, and set out for Boddam. Our course lay over the downs, where the rabbits were disporting themselves, unconscious of danger. Unlike the wonderfully instinctive sea birds, they possess no sentinels or outposts to warn them of the enemy; but in revenge they have unpleasantly sharp ears that seem to tell them of sounds even where no sounds are.

It had been a strangely pleasant day, but the walk home over the loose sandhills was long and tiring; and one of us at least was not sorry to catch sight of Boddam sleeping under the shadow of the hill, whilst the blue peat-smoke, curling out of the kitchen chimney, suggested pleasant visions of dinner.

We found Kirstie up to her eyes in work and importance. In the middle of the kitchen stood a long, tublike machine, about a yard

high and a foot and a half in diameter, narrowing at the top, and Kirstie, labouring with a churn-staff, was conjuring cream into butter. A strong, red-cheeked country girl, Kirstie's fag, was looking on, and Kirstie would allow her occasionally to take a turn at the staff, standing over her to see that it was properly done. This churn-staff was being vigorously worked up and down to a distinct rhythm, or measure, without which Kirstie would not have believed in the butter that came. As she churned she shot forth her remarks to one or another : and we escaped not her quick penetration and sharp wit, when she refused to believe that the seal had been left behind to be stuffed.

She had just been making a batch of scones, thirty or forty of them, and whilst churning, superintended the baking and turning in the oven. Delicious they were, though made of coarse meal of a dull dun colour ; meal that had probably been ground in one of the little Shetland mills dotted about the country, and of which the accompanying illustrations will give some idea to the reader. I acknowledged their merit when she offered me one hot, smoking, and well-buttered, and asked for a compliment upon the lightness of her hand. Soon, too, the contents of the churn diminished, condensed, and the butter, from which the milk had presently to be pressed, came in answer to the measured call of the churn-staff—that wordless song of the dairy.

The next morning, before breakfast, we went out mushroom-hunting. Mrs. Sinclair carried a capacious basket, whilst G. took up his gun, for the express purpose of shooting a large black-backed gull. And shoot one he did : a magnificent creature : but unluckily it fell on the slope of the precipice, and was lost in the depths below. Grand depths they were, that caused a shudder as you looked over, and a step backwards. There are caves here, and we went into one of them, and walked through to another opening, stepping round corners in a dexterous but not very safe manner, listening to the mighty sway of the ocean as it dashed against them, and shook them, and moved them not. On our return large supplies of mushrooms gladdened the housewifely eyes of Mrs. Laurence, who saw in them fine bottles of future ketchup, and begrudged us a few of the best as a *bonne-bouche* for our breakfast-table. But turning round suddenly, Kirstie set up a pantomime of winks and nods, intimating that she would look after our interest in the matter.

It was towards the end of our week, and we were coming home leisurely one evening, after a good day's sport on a neighbouring lake, a bag of fine trout over our shoulders, when we perceived in the vicinity of Boddam a large cloud of rising smoke. What could it mean ? It seemed to increase, and we half fearfully, half wonderingly expressed our doubts. Could this be anything but fire ? It looked very much like it. We had been absent eight hours at least : should we find Boddam a heap of ruins ? But the house, at any rate, was standing.

Once inside, we found the women folk in as much commotion as a

hen yard invaded by a fox. Mrs. Laurence's usually pale, placid face was red and agitated, whilst Kirstie in words and activity had transformed herself from one woman into twenty. "She always said so; she knew it would be; if folks wouldna have their foul chimneys swept, they must expect a fire; it was only a natural consequence; you couldna expect duck's eggs in a hen's nest. The next thing, the house would be burnt about their heads, or they burnt in their beds. But as no harm had happened, she must say it was a very fine, cheap, and quick way of cleaning a chimney: and if it gave them a little fright, it saved a deal o' bother."

All this was uttered in rapid, northern brogue possessing a power of its own: and so saying, she darted upwards to our sitting-room, with a singed sheep's head, one of the delicacies of the country. We should have our dinner, said Kirstie, whatever happened; a pleasant hearing, for we were hungry as hunters.

Thankful we felt for all concerned that it was no worse: and especially that it cleared the house of the abominable peat smell and smoke that had half suffocated, half kippered, half consumed us. The mysterious attacks, so much the delight and puzzle of the doctor, disappeared, like the smoke, literally into thin air, and his treatise had to be abandoned. The disappointment was too much for him; shortly afterwards he "went south," married, and Boddam and its neighbourhood knew him no more.

His work there must have been hard and laborious, and he did it conscientiously. Often he would be called up in the middle of the night, and have many miles to ride before he got back from his patient. On such occasions, he told me, it would frequently be so dark that, unable to see his way, he would give the reins to his horse, and let it take its own road. The animal never missed its footing or went astray. If the same could only be said of ourselves

That night, in answer to a telegram, our machine came down from Lerwick, and the next morning we started on our return journey. We left Mrs. Laurence in a maze of happiness too deep for words. She had had telegrams to say that her two sons, whom she had not seen for some years, were both coming to her by that night's boat. The brothers also had not met for many years, and now—strange fact—each did not know that the other was coming. One was starting from Granton; the other would join the boat as she passed Fair Isle, half way between Orkney and Shetland: and the first one to help him on board, and grasp his hand would be his own long unseen brother. Strange coincidence, in this world of chance!

We left Boddam pleased with our week's visit. In a country where changes are few, and they more of degree than kind, it had been a break in our quiet Shetland life.

DESMOND'S MODEL.

BY MARY E. PENN.

I.

FOUR o'clock on a sultry June afternoon.

The sun beat fiercely on the Tuscan landscape; not a cloud dimmed the burning blue of the sky. The Apennines were dreaming in a haze of heat which softened their rugged outlines; in the valley of the Secchia the river rippled languidly over its stony bed, bereaved of its myriad tributary streams. The grass was burnt brown, the vines were white with dust; only the olive-trees looked cool, with their soft grey-green foliage, vaguely suggesting mist and moonlight.

Dust, drought, and sultry silence, broken only by the cigala's tiny chirp, prevailed over all the landscape.

At the end of the valley farthest from Lucca a rough, zigzag road winds upwards into the solitude of the hills. Two figures were just now toiling up the steep ascent; not Tuscan peasants, but a couple of Englishmen, in dusty tweed suits, each having a bundle of artists' traps strapped above his well-worn knapsack. The taller of the two stepped out at a good pace some yards in advance of his companion, singing "Mandolinata" in a musical baritone; the other, who was some years older, and of a stouter build, plodded on stolidly behind him, pausing now and then to wipe his forehead, and grumble at the heat. His pauses grew more frequent as they proceeded, for the road got steeper at every yard. At length, when a sudden turn revealed another long ascent before them, he uttered a smothered groan, and, stopping abruptly, hailed his companion.

"Hallo—Desmond!"

The latter turned. "What is it?"

His friend only beckoned in reply, and, sitting down on the sunburnt turf by the road-side, unstrapped his knapsack, and leaned back with a long sigh of relief. Desmond paused a moment, then came leisurely back, humming the conclusion of his song. He was as handsome a young fellow as you will meet in a summer day. Fair, but sunburnt, with curly brown hair, frank, happy blue eyes, and a smile whose caressing sweetness few men, and still fewer women, could resist. He was dressed with an odd mixture of dandified nicety and Bohemian carelessness. A paint-stained coat and battered brigand hat seemed little in harmony with his superfine linen, to say nothing of the diamond ring on his little finger, which showed to advantage at this moment, as he stood twirling the ends of his moustache, and looking down at his friend on the bank.

"Well, old fellow, what's the matter?"

"The matter is that I am dead-beat. Not another step can I go up this heart-breaking hill."

"Is it, then, your intention to spend the night on that bank?"

"It is my intention to rest here till after sunset at all events; unless some good Samaritan with a cart happens to pass by, and will give me a lift."

"Well, but my good fellow, you must be shockingly out of condition to be so easily knocked up. The fact is, Thorburn—don't be offended—you are getting fat."

"Fat!" Thorburn sat upright to give emphasis to his indignant protest. "Fat! it's a libel. I was never in better training. But on a road like this, with the thermometer at heaven knows how much in the shade ——"

"Stop, stop!" interrupted Desmond, laughing. "I retract. I apologise. It is the heat, of course. You see we left Lucca an hour too late this morning ——"

"Yes, you were flirting with that pretty American widow at the Hotel del' Universo; otherwise ——"

"How could I better employ myself while you were snoring, you lazy humbug. If you had got up when I called you, instead of pitching a boot at me, and going to sleep again, we should have been at San Giovanni-della-Rocca by this time."

"Well, if you are in a hurry to reach San-what-its-name, go on, and leave me to follow at my leisure."

"In a hurry? not I," Desmond returned, throwing himself on the grass at his friend's side, and lighting a cigar. "I am quite content to sit in the sun, and let things take their course."

A pause of meditative puffing.

"How still it is; how lonely, how grand! What a noble purple on those distant hills! One might be content to stay here for ever—the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

"The world would forget us soon enough, you may be sure," muttered Thorburn. "A short memory is one of its many pleasing ——"

"Shut up, you old cynic, and don't abuse the world," interrupted Desmond. "It has its faults, no doubt; but:—"

'Until you can show me a happier planet,
More genial and bright, I'll content me with this.'

He sang the lines, and then clasping his hands under his head, watched the smoke curling up from his cigar.

Thorburn gave him a glance, half envious, half admiring, and wholly affectionate. In spite—or, perhaps, because of the difference in their characters—they were fast friends. They had been chums at school, fellow-students at the same drawing academy, and started abreast on the race of life. Desmond had already distanced his companion, but that fact had in no degree affected their friendship.

"Yes, you find it a jolly place, no doubt," said Thorburn. "So should I, if I were in your shoes, with not a care to burden me."

"That remark shows how little you know me," replied Desmond. "Cares? I have heaps of them! I was brooding over one when you hailed me just now. Here we are, nearly at the end of our tour, and I have not yet found a model for my 'Lucretia Borgia.' If she doesn't turn up soon that great picture, which was to take the public by storm next May, will never be painted."

"I thought you found her at Lucca. The coppersmith's handsome wife ——"

"A glorious creature; but she was dark, my dear boy," interrupted Desmond, raising himself on his elbow. "Now, la Borgia was a golden blonde; there is a lock of her hair in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. Are you listening?"

"Yes," Thorburn answered, drowsily. "Well, perhaps you'll find her at San Giovanni: who knows? Suppose you go on, and look for her, and if there is a conveyance of any sort in the place, you can send down for me. Pray go."

"Disinterested advice!" laughed the other, as he rose and shook himself. "Would a wheelbarrow suit you, *faute de mieux*? If there is anything in the place that will carry you, I'll send it; but if it doesn't arrive in an hour's time you had better walk on. Remember, we are to put up at the 'Aquila Nera,' in the Piazza."

He went a few yards, then paused, and stooped to read the half-defaced inscription on a boundary-stone which marked the point where a path branched off to the left.

"I shall go this way," he called out, looking back: "it is rougher, but shorter, I fancy."

"Stick to the road," was Thorburn's caution.

"It *is* the road, unless this thing fibs like a tombstone. 'San Giovan' del'——and some hieroglyphic, intended, no doubt, for Rocca. It's all right. *A rivederci!*'"

And he was gone.

Having watched him out of sight, Thorburn settled himself luxuriously on the turf, put his knapsack under his head for a pillow, and in five minutes was fast asleep.

The golden afternoon waned towards evening. As the sun declined, deep, gloomy purple shadows spread up the slopes, and gradually enfolded the hills like an imperial mantle. A rosy light still lingered on the peaks, but the valleys were lost in soft, mysterious gloom.

At length Thorburn woke, feeling chilled and stiff, and having only a hazy idea of where he was. Looking round, he was startled at the lengthening shadows, and hastily buckling on his knapsack, set off again. Having a rooted distrust of "short cuts," however plausible, he kept to the main road.

Soon, the sun's red rim dropped out of sight behind the farthest

mountain range ; the brief twilight was quickly past, and "with great strides came the dark." The sky was soon all luminous with stars ; then a ghostly light like dawn spread upwards from behind the cleft summit of La Pagna, and presently out of that light rose the full-orbed moon.

The artist trudged on in the silence and the moonlight, his feet falling noiselessly on the dusty road, where himself was the only living object visible for miles. Once a convent-chime, ringing for the Benediction Offices, sounded musically from a neighbouring hill-side, and a little church, hidden among olive woods in the valley below, answered with a single cracked bell. Then there was silence again ; the majestic silence of the hills, fraught with solemn meaning.

At length, another turn of the weary way brought him in sight of his destination—an ancient, world-forsaken little town, perched on a rocky eminence, dark against the stars ; its brown, sun-baked houses nestling round a ruined citadel, athwart whose rents the moonlight slanted.

Up a steep stretch of road, with horizontal lines of rough stone paving at intervals, like the rungs of a ladder ; past a wayside crucifix, with a blind beggar sitting on the steps at its foot ; over a bridge which spanned the dry bed of a water-course, under an arch in a massive wall, where a dim oil-lamp burnt before the shrine of "Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows," and into a crooked, dark, ill-smelling street, where the houses seemed to meet overhead, shutting out the sky.

The day's work was over, and the townspeople stood about in the arched doorways and on the steep steps of their houses to take the fresh air—"pigliare il fresco"—though it was still hot and close enough in the narrow ways, where there was a mixed smell of garlic and melons and wine and polenta, with here and there a whiff of odours less ambrosial.

Women with white head-gear leaned out of the unglazed casements ; men lounged on the pavement playing at "Morra ;" brown, half-naked children played and fought in the gutters. Someone was strumming a mandoline, and singing a plaintive Tuscan "Rispetto."

The street emerged into a paved square, on one side of which stood the church, a quaint, ancient edifice, with a Lombard tower, and an open belfry, where the bats were flitting in and out among the bell-ropes ; and on the other, the inn, a flat-roofed, stone-galleried house, with one wide doorway.

The inevitable group of gossips lounged on the steps ; the cooper and the baker, and the little barber from next door, and the barber's stout wife, with a baby in her arms, so tightly swaddled that it looked like a wooden doll. The landlord surveyed the group from the doorway, which he completely filled ; a burly, good-tempered looking man, with a large, clean-shaven, olive face, and a shining bald head.

On Thorburn's approach the conversation ceased, and half a dozen dark eyes were turned upon him, curiously, but not rudely. The men made way for him to pass, uncovering, with grave courtesy, while the "padrone" bowed himself backwards into the house, with a gesture which placed himself, his establishment, and all his belongings at the traveller's disposal.

The door opened at once upon a great bare sala, with stone floor, frescoed walls, and a rafted ceiling, from which an oil-lamp was suspended by a chain.

"My friend has arrived, I suppose?" the artist said, glancing round.

The innkeeper paused in the middle of a bow, and looked at him inquiringly.

"The signor expected to meet a friend here?"

"Certainly; he went on first, and must have arrived two or three hours ago."

The other shrugged his shoulders with a deprecating smile, and gesture of his outspread palms.

"I have not had the honour of welcoming this gentleman. The signor himself is the only traveller who has arrived here to-day."

"Perhaps he has gone to some other inn," Thorburn began, "though he certainly said ——"

"Excuse me, signor, there is no other. L'Aguila Nera is the only inn of San Giovanni."

And the group at the door, who were interested and attentive listeners, promptly confirmed the padrone's statement. Thorburn looked perplexed.

"I fear he must have lost his way," he said, after a pause. "He was probably misled by the inscription on a boundary stone, where a path ——"

"Ecco! that leads to St. Giovanni-in-the-Vale, a village two leagues and a half from here!" half a dozen voices exclaimed at once.

"Then he will certainly not be here to-night," the artist remarked, as he threw his knapsack on the table and sat down. "What sort of place is this other St. Giovanni? There is an inn, I suppose, where he could put up?"

"Ma si, there is an inn—of a sort," mine host assented with a shrug, as he spread a coarse white cloth over one end of the long oaken table. "Alessandro Morelli's. Not in the village itself, but on the hill-road, half an hour's walk beyond. It stands on the site of an ancient Carthusian monastery. Morelli bought the land for a song, ruins and all, and built himself a house out of the old stones. Some say it was sacrilege, and that the house is accursed ——"

"The man is," put in the cooper in an undertone.

"Keep thy tongue quiet, Tonio mio," the host returned, with a grave, cautionary nod. "We know nothing against 'Sandro Morelli, except that he is sullen and unsociable, and that he is jealous of his

wife ; and as she is a handsome woman, nearly twenty years younger than himself, that is excusable."

"Bella bellissima—la Bianca!" exclaimed the little barber, rapturously. "Per Baccho, if I had a wife as handsome—no offence to thee, mia gioja," he added, turning to his fat, and decidedly plain "better half"—"I should be jealous as Bluebeard—via!"

"And what handsome woman would marry a snippet like thee?" his "joy" returned composedly, on which there was a general laugh.

"Brava, Caterina," exclaimed the landlord. "Your tongue is sharper than Nello's razors. Yes, Bianca is beautiful," he continued; "but, to my thinking, there is something uncanny about her. She has a frozen look. Her face is like a lovely mask, and what the soul behind it may be, Heaven only knows."

"She is unhappy, perhaps," Thorburn suggested, wondering whether this beautiful "uncanny" woman would prove to be the model Desmond had been seeking.

"How should she be otherwise with such a husband as she has got?" demanded the barber's wife shrilly. "Santa Maria! if he were mine, I'd cure him of 'jealousy,' I'll warrant you."

"Ay, your face would cure him of that, mia bella," remarked her husband drily: and this time the laugh was against her.

"Ebbene, my friends," said the landlord, as he set knife and fork, plate and glass, before his guest; "it is getting late, and as the signor's supper will be ready in the space of a credo——"

The visitors took the hint in perfect good part, and at once withdrew, wishing the stranger "buona notte."

The supper was not long in making its appearance. It consisted of a basin of vegetable soup, flavoured with grated cheese, a portion of roast kid, smoking hot, a scrap of Parmesan, on the same plate with half a dozen wizened little apples, and a cup of black coffee to conclude with. Everything that was not flavoured with cheese tasted more or less of garlic. However, a flask of capital Monte Pulciano made amends for the defects of the cuisine, and when he had finished it, and had taken a stroll in the Piazza, where the quaint shadow of the church lay black across the moon-whitened pavement, the artist asked to be shown to his room.

It proved to be a long, drafty apartment with a tiled floor; clean enough, but supremely uncomfortable. However, too used to roughing it to be critical, he soon "turned in," leaving the lamp burning. Tired as he was, it was some time before he slept.

Fragmentary recollections of the past day haunted him; the hill scenery unrolled before him in an endless panorama; he heard the convent bells; the tinkling mandoline; the voices of the gossips at the inn door. Then his thoughts reverted to Desmond, whom he pictured arriving next morning, brisk and blithe, and debonair, making himself at home in the place at once, joking with the host, rambling about the old town in search of his "Lucretia Borgia,"

and incidentally making acquaintance with every man, woman, and child he encountered.

With a smile at the thought, Thorburn at length fell asleep.

How long his sleep lasted he never knew. He woke with a start—woke completely, passing without transition from the deep insensibility of dreamless slumber into full consciousness—and sat up in bed, looking round him with a bewildered stare.

Had he dreamt it, or had he really heard Desmond calling him?

He listened. Within and without the house all was profoundly still; so still that he could hear the owls hooting in the wide dark country outside the walls of the town.

He sprang out of bed and went to the window; perhaps Desmond was waiting for admittance, in the street below?

Half in the forlorn light of the waning moon, half in the black shadow of the church, the Piazza lay, bare, silent, solitary; with no living creature visible save a vagabond dog, creeping stealthily across it. The town was silent as a city of the dead; in the distance the owls still hooted mournfully with a sound of "Woe—woe!"

As he leaned on the window-ledge looking out, and pondering over his strange delusion, a curious feeling of numbness and insensibility began to creep over him. It was as though a thick veil or cloud were gradually interposed between his senses and the outer world. There was an interval of blank unconsciousness, from which he awoke—into a dream. His wide-open eyes were still fixed on the Piazza, but with some mysterious inner vision he beheld a quite different scene; one utterly unfamiliar to him.

He was standing, he thought, in the interior of a half-ruined tower, which seemed to have been the Campanile of some church or chapel. Through a breach in the walls he could see, outside, a large weed-grown courtyard, with the remains of a cloistered walk at one side, and at the end a low stone house, half hidden by trees.

Suddenly he heard Desmond's voice calling him. It seemed to come, hollow and muffled, from beneath the flooring of the tower, under his feet. He looked round, and noticed for the first time a low, arched door in one of the massive walls. It was open, showing a flight of worn stone steps, leading to a vault or crypt below.

He was not conscious of changing his position, but the next moment he seemed to be in the crypt. It had a damp and earthy odour, and was profoundly dark, except where a faint mysterious light at one end showed him—Desmond, stretched on the damp stones, in a pool of his own blood.

The shock of horror which ran through him at that sight, broke the spell. His vision suddenly faded into darkness; gradually, as it had gathered, the cloud passed from his perceptions, and he regained consciousness, to find himself still standing at the window, with his eyes fixed on the moonlit Piazza.

He sank into a chair, passing his hand over his damp forehead. His heart beat tumultuously; his mind was in a whirl. What had he seen?

Was it only a waking dream—an hallucination—the result perhaps of over fatigue? No; it was far too real, too vivid! That terrible picture seemed burnt into his brain; when he closed his eyes he could still see it, painted on the darkness; and Desmond's voice—urgent, imploring, reproachful—rang in his ears; a passionate, despairing summons, uttered in a moment of supreme peril. Had it reached him too late?

The thought went through his heart like a knife. He started to his feet, resolved to lose no more time in vain conjectures, but to get ready at once, and be away with the first gleam of morning in search of his friend. Already the moon and stars were paling, as a faint cold light crept upwards from the east, and by the time that he was dressed the sky was flushed with the lovely rose of dawn.

II.

HALF an hour later, Thorburn passed out of the gate, under the shrine of "Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows," and went his way down the steep road, leaving behind him the forlorn little town on its rocky height, dark against the dawn, as last night he had seen it dark against the stars.

Beautiful beyond telling was the scene which stretched before him, bathed in the ineffable brightness and stillness of early morning. The bare and melancholy Apennines, transfigured by the flush of sunrise, looked radiant, rose-coloured, ethereal; like mountains in a fairy tale, or a dream. The valleys were still white with mist, but here and there a rent in the gauzy veil disclosed distant towns and villages; a monastery or hillside belfry gleaming white from amidst woods of olive or chestnut. The swallows wheeled high up in the luminous air; little golden-green lizards basked in the sunshine; myriads of yellow butterflies flitted past, like leaves that the light breeze scatters in sport.

Everything seemed full of life and joy this radiant summer morning, and, in spite of himself, Thorburn felt the influence of the scene. He could not altogether shake off the vague apprehension which oppressed him, but he felt, somehow, relieved and reassured. Out here, in the air and the sunlight, supernatural fears seemed absurd.

The dew was still on the grass when he reached St. Giovanni-in-the-Vale; a squalid, straggling village, with one "long, unlovely street;" where fowls, pigs and children disported themselves indiscriminately.

On making enquiries he found that Desmond had not been seen in the place the day before, but a little goat-herd—a grinning, white-

toothed, sunburnt urchin—had passed him “just after sun-down, on the hill-road, not far from 'Sandro Morelli's.”

Without a moment's delay Thorburn set off again.

The road, which wound upwards out of a thickly wooded valley, was little more than a waggon track; dry and crumbling, and strewn with pebbles, like the bed of a torrent. He had followed it for some distance before he reached any habitation, and then it was only a solitary farmhouse standing back from the road, with a few poor fields of maize and corn, and a little grove of chestnut trees at the side.

A man was digging in the field close to the house, and Thorburn approached him to learn how far he still was from his destination.

On being addressed, the other shook back a tangled mane of black hair and looked up. He was a muscular, broad-shouldered fellow, of the type which, in Tuscan phrase, is “moulded with the fist, and polished with the pick-axe;” with a sombre, olive-tinted face, and fierce, haggard dark eyes. His blue and white shirt was open at the neck, showing a massive brown throat; his bare feet were thrust into wooden shoes.

He stuck his spade into the ground, and looked his interlocutor over at his leisure before he replied, nodding over his shoulder at the building behind them. “There it is.”

“That! But that is a farm, not an inn.”

“Call it what you like. There is the house, and here am I, 'Sandro Morelli, if you want me.” And he went on digging.

The artist turned to look at the house, and noticed for the first time that the bough which serves in lieu of sign at the humbler class of Osterias, hung over the door. It was a poor place, roughly built of great blocks of stone which had evidently once served a more dignified purpose. No ruins were to be seen from the road.

“A friend of mine, an Englishman, put up here last night,” Thorburn resumed; “shall I find him indoors?”

The man looked up again, shading his eyes from the sun.

“You are mistaken; your friend did not put up here. We had no guest in the house last night.”

Thorburn started, looking at him in doubt and incredulity.

“But—but there is no other inn where he could have lodged, and when last seen he was close to your house.”

“When was that?”

“Just after sunset yesterday.”

“I was out then; my wife may have seen him pass. You can ask her; there she is.”

The artist turned towards the house, and found himself in the presence of the loveliest woman he had ever seen or dreamed of. She stood in the doorway, like a radiant picture in a dark frame; “a daughter of the gods, divinely tall, and most divinely fair.” She was in the noontide of her beauty; her figure full, but not

heavy, her small head nobly set above the rounded throat and shoulders. Her complexion was of that warm whiteness which an old poet calls "a golden pallor;" hazel eyes, soft as velvet, looked out from under level brows; rippled hair, of a rare and lovely shade of tawny gold, was coiled in superb luxuriance round her head.

"Half light, half shade she stood;
"A sight to make an old man young."

But her face had an expression which seemed out of harmony with its radiant and gracious beauty; a fixed, inscrutable look, like that which perplexes one sometimes in the marble features of some antique statue, whose legend is long forgotten.

"Speak, then," her husband said roughly; "you heard the question."

"A gentleman—a signor inglese—passed by yesterday evening, after sunset," she answered, addressing Thorburn.

"Passed by?" he repeated; "did he not come to the house?"

There was a pause before she answered. Her husband looked up at her, with his foot on the spade.

"He came to the door," she said slowly, looking at him, and not at her questioner. "I was standing here, and he asked me for a glass of water."

"And then?" Thorburn interrogated anxiously. "That was not all?"

"What more should there be?" the man exclaimed impatiently; "he asked for a glass of water, and when he had drunk it, went on his way."

Thorburn glanced from one to the other, and after a moment's pause, said quietly: "I have had my walk for nothing it seems. I will rest a few moments if you please, and taste your wine, before going further."

As Bianca drew back for him to pass, her eyes met his with a look that thrilled and startled him. Fear, warning, entreaty—what did that eloquent glance express? He felt that it was full of significance if he had but the clue.

The door opened upon the kitchen, a quaint, homely place, with coarse frescoes on the walls, gaudy cups and plates displayed on a cupboard, and a waxen image on the chimney-piece. One wide unglazed casement, with prison-like bars across, looked out upon the fields; opposite the entrance was another door, closed. The room was hot and close, pervaded by a musty smell of dried herbs and beans and onions.

The man followed them in at once, and half sat, half leaned on a table under the window, with his back to the light.

Moving like Juno, and looking, in her homely dress, like a queen in disguise, Bianca placed before the visitor a flask of wine and half a loaf of coarse bread.

"Are there any remains of the convent which once stood here?" he asked, as he poured out the wine. "I see no ruins."

"They are in the court at the back," the man replied; "only a cloister and the bell-tower."

Thorburn was raising the glass to his lips. He set it down untasted.

"Apparently our wine is not to your liking?" Morelli remarked.

"The room is close, I feel stifled."

Obeying a gesture of her husband, Bianca opened the other door, opposite to which Thorburn was sitting, and admitted a brilliant flood of sunshine.

Outside, in the light and heat, was a spacious weed-grown courtyard, encumbered with wood-stacks, oil-presses, and heaps of hay and straw.

At one side was a damp, dilapidated stone cloister; at the end, a ruined Lombard tower.

The artist put his hands before his eyes as if the light dazzled him.

He felt a creeping chill among the roots of his hair, and his hands, burning hot a moment ago, were suddenly damp and cold. Plainly as if it were then before him, he could see the dark vault, the prostrate figure, the dreadful red stain on the stone floor —

For a moment horror paralysed him, but that weakness passed, and left him deadly calm. His hand was steady, his senses quickened, his nerves braced to meet danger in any shape. He furtively felt in the breast pocket of his coat to make sure that something without which he never travelled was still there, then rose, and approached the door.

"Are those the ruins? They are picturesque. I should like to have a nearer view of them."

"'Scusa," Morelli returned, "we do not make a show of them. If you are curious in old stones there are plenty to be seen elsewhere."

"But I have heard that these are particularly interesting," Thorburn answered deliberately; "that there is a vault or crypt under the tower."

"Who told you that?" The exclamation seemed to have escaped him involuntarily. He bit his lip, and added hastily: "There is no crypt; at least, I know of none."

"Perhaps you have not looked for it? Curious discoveries are made in such places sometimes." He spoke the last words looking the other full in the eyes.

Morelli's face changed—turned ashy pale, haggard, terrible; and his hand stole to his waistband. But he checked himself, and, after a moment's pause, said, with a sudden and sinister change of manner to ironical courtesy: "Well, signor, if you are bent on making discoveries, I will not thwart you. You shall see the tower. Come with us, *mia bella*," he added, turning to his wife, who was standing motionless in the shadow at the end of the room.

She came forward, moving mechanically, like a sleep-walker ; her eyes fixed upon her husband's face.

"Go first," he said, drawing back for her to pass. She preceded them out of the house and across the courtyard to the entrance of the tower ; there she paused, and stood in the arch, with her hand on a projecting fragment of masonry, while Morelli and the artist entered.

Thorburn looked round. The place was like and unlike the scene of his vision. The general features were the same, but the details differed. The tower was roofless ; overhead was a space of cloudless sky, where a flock of pigeons fluttered, white against the blue. Heaps of débris encumbered the floor, and were piled against the walls. No door was visible. As he looked round in perplexity, his eyes lighted on Bianca's face. With one lightning glance, unobserved by her husband, she indicated a point in the wall opposite to the entrance. He took but one stride towards it, and began to tear away the rubbish that was heaped against it—hastily, fiercely, flinging the stones behind him, regardless where they fell. Behind, deep-set in the massive masonry, was a low, nail-studded door.

He looked round at Morelli, pointing to it without a word. The latter approached. There was an ill-omened smile on his lips, but his face was white, and his eyes had a look of menace not to be mistaken.

"The signor is a magician, truly. Such knowledge is wonderful—and a little dangerous. It is always dangerous to know too much." Then, with a gesture of mock courtesy, he added : " *Excellenza !* I follow you."

Thorburn had his hand upon the bolt, but before he could draw it, a voice behind cried, "Stay—stay !" and a hand grasped his arm. It was Bianca. Bianca—so transformed by excitement that she looked like another woman. The stony, apathetic expression had fallen from her face like a mask ; her eyes were dilated, and a scarlet spot burned in her cheeks.

"You must not pass that door till you have heard what I have to tell you," she panted. "Ay ! I will speak now, though you kill me the next moment," she added, turning to her husband with a gesture of defiance. "The signor shall know all—and so shall you. I have something to tell that you do not dream of."

Morelli looked at her stupidly ; he seemed too amazed at the change in her to take in the sense of her words.

"I know or guess the worst already," Thorburn said solemnly. "I know that my friend lies in the vault under our feet. I believe that he has been foully murdered ——"

"No, no !" she interrupted, triumphantly ; "not murdered—for he is alive !"

The two men uttered a simultaneous exclamation—Thorburn of joy, the Italian of rage and incredulity.

"It is false!" he shouted furiously, threatening her with his hand; "clever as you are, you could not bring your lover to life again."

She looked at him with a smile of scorn. "My lover? I never saw him till yesterday, when he came to the door to ask for a drink of water. He begged me—as courteously as if I had been a queen—to let him draw my face, to put in a picture he was painting. I consented; where was the harm? but he had hardly begun, when you burst into the place—you had been watching me, I suppose, as usual—insulted him, struck me, and, when he interposed to defend me from your violence—O Dio! shall I ever forget seeing him fall at my feet?"

She shuddered, and hid her face in her hands.

"But listen," she went on breathlessly. "When I was hiding in this place last night—for I could not breathe under the roof that sheltered you—I heard a sound in the vault below. It was a voice—the voice of the man you had left there for dead—crying for help. I hurried back to the house, got a lantern, a flask of wine, and some other things, and went down into the vault. There he lay, on the damp stones, bleeding to death in the dark. He was conscious, but his mind wandered. He took me for an angel, and said such wild, beautiful things! I bound up his wound, and sat with him all night, putting wine to his lips to keep the life in him. Towards morning he fell into a stupor, and then I left him, piling up the stones outside the door, as I found them. You kept close watch upon me, but if you had tied me hand and foot I would have found a way, before the sun was high, to escape and denounce you!"

With a hoarse cry of rage he rushed upon her, knife in hand. Thorburn interposed just in time; and, placing himself before her, drew out his revolver. Savage and desperate, the man made a snatch at it, wrenched it from his grasp, and pointed it full in his face. Quick as thought, the artist struck up his arm. There was a flash, a sharp report, and Morelli staggered backwards, and fell headlong, shot through the brain.

The first moment of stupefaction past, Thorburn bent over the body, and turned the face upwards. After one glance, he rose.

"Your husband brought his death upon himself," he said, gravely; "but if you had told me the truth when I spoke to you at the door, this might have been avoided."

"Signor—forgive me! I tried to speak, but—but with his eyes upon me, I durst not. You do not know what he was," she added, in a shuddering whisper, with a side-long glance at the prostrate figure—never more to be feared now.

Thorburn looked at her compassionately. "I understand," he said gently; "I will not reproach you. Come—let us waste no more time. There is a life to be saved;" and, drawing back the heavy bolt, he descended the steps into the crypt.

An oil-lamp in one corner diffused a feeble circle of light around,

leaving the extremities of the vaulted chamber in obscurity. Near the light, on a heap of straw and rugs, lay Desmond, with an awful stillness and pallor on his face, which made the handsome features seem unfamiliar to his friend.

"We are too late!" groaned Thorburn.

"No, signor; he is only in a swoon, just as I left him." She put back the damp, disordered hair from his forehead. "How beautiful he is!" she murmured, with a sort of awe; "like the pictures of the blessed St. John."

Her touch seemed to rouse him. His eyes unclosed and rested on her face.

"You are still here? Oh, you are kinder than my friend," he whispered. "I called to him—till my voice failed—but he never came."

Those words gave Thorburn a curious thrill. "I am here now, Frank, old fellow," he said huskily; but Desmond had already relapsed into insensibility.

"He must not remain here; but can you help me to carry him, Bianca?"

"Yes, yes," she assented eagerly, extending her strong white arms.

Between them they bore him up the steps, across the courtyard, and into the house, and laid him down on the bed in an inner chamber—a bed which he was not destined to leave for many a weary day.

"Here's a pretty state of things! I must have been as blind as a bat not to have seen it before."

It was Thorburn who spoke, and the words were addressed to himself in a tone of vexation and perplexity.

Three weeks had passed away, and Desmond, thanks partly to an excellent constitution, but chiefly to Bianca's tender nursing, had "healed him of his grievous wound," and was pronounced by the worthy leech of San Giovanni to be quite well enough to travel. But he showed a reluctance to leave his present quarters, which Thorburn was at a loss to understand, till, on returning from a sketching expedition one afternoon, he was accidentally the witness of a scene which let a flood of light into his mind, and caused him to utter the ejaculation recorded above.

Desmond, white and gaunt, but as handsome as ever, lay on the turf in the shadow of the chestnut trees at the side of the house. Bianca sat near him; she had a tress of straw in her fingers, but she was not plaiting. Her hands lay idle on her lap, her eyes were downcast. Never had she looked so lovely as at this moment, when her face was transfigured by some new and sweet emotion.

Leaning on his elbow and his side, and looking at her with all his heart in his eyes, Desmond was speaking earnestly, passionately; evidently pleading his cause with all a lover's eloquence.

Thorburn saw her give him one quick glance, in which joy and sadness were strangely mingled ; saw him take her hands, and draw her nearer, till her golden hair brushed his lips—then, suddenly becoming conscious that he was playing the spy, he went indoors, and sat down at the table near the window. “H’m—well, if he *will* make a fool of himself, he must. Certainly she is a lovely creature, and she saved his life, and—— Anyhow, I can’t interfere.” He had not long arrived at this conclusion, when, to his surprise, Bianca entered. There was a look on her face which made him exclaim : “What is the matter ? Is Desmond worse ?”

“No, signor, he is better,” she said quietly ; “so much better that he can spare me now. So I am going.”

“Going !” he echoed ; “going where ?”

“To the Convent of Corellia. Lucia will take charge of the house till I return—if I ever return. Perhaps, by-and-by, I shall take the veil.”

He looked at her without speaking. She stood before him in an attitude of composed and patient melancholy, her hands folded before her, her eyes veiled by their white lids.

“Does my friend know ?” he asked at length.

Her lips quivered.

“No, I—could not tell him. You will tell him to-night, when I am gone.”

“He will be deeply hurt at your leaving him in this way. You must know that he ——”

“Yes,” she interrupted, “I know. It is because I know it that I leave him. Signor, he has just asked me to be his wife—me,” she repeated, with a smile of self-pity. “Look at me, and think of it.”

Thorburn did look at her, standing before him in her matchless loveliness, and, regardless of prudence, said what came into his mind. “Your beauty would grace any station.”

“My beauty—and when that fades, what is there left to charm him ? I am an ignorant peasant. I could not live his life, or think his thoughts. Sooner or later he would weary of me, and then—then my heart would break.”

She was silent a moment.

“No, no,” she continued. “It is a hundred times impossible ! He will grieve for a while, but the world is all before him : he will soon—yes, soon forget.”

“And you, Bianca ?”

She looked out through the window, as if she were looking into the dim vista of years to come.

“And I—shall remember,” she murmured, as she turned away.

AUNT MONA.

MY Aunt Mona, if her own words might be believed, had hardly been well for a day throughout her life, certainly not for one during the last twenty years. She walked the earth a bundle of unstrung nerves, an incarnation of aches and pains, a living sufferer of all the disorders that poor mortals are liable to, a specimen of utter misery and living martyrdom. From the crown of her smooth brown head down to her pretty feet, there was no sound health in her. So she would assure us ten times a day.

How is it, I wonder, that people who have every essential good in life to make them comfortable, must create discomfort for themselves? Some do it. One will seek it in fretfulness, another in jealousy, a third in wearing anxiety about nothing. I suppose that, as a certain amount of suffering is, and must be, the lot of all, while they inhabit this world, those upon whom Heaven has not inflicted it, must needs inflict it on themselves. Aunt Mona found hers in health. That is, you understand, in the lack of health.

And she might have been so bright and happy! The wife of Thomas Butterfield, substantial yeoman and farmer, whose crops never seemed to fail, and whose house was filled with plenty, Aunt Mona had every substantial good, in their plain way, that she could have. Her children were hearty, her friends true. But that health of hers ruined everything. Any husband less sunny-tempered than Uncle Butterfield, would have become morose ere this. Mr. Whale, the parson, talking of it one evening to my father, when he had called in and stayed supper, and they became confidential over their whisky-and-water, declared he should have shaken her long ago were she his wife, and been fit to turn her out of doors afterwards.

Aunt Mona did not sit patiently down and endure her suffering; she had too much spirit for that. I don't believe there was a doctor within a hundred miles who had not heard the dismal story of her manifold and ever-increasing ailments.

She had tried allopathy, homœopathy, hydropathy; she had consulted various kinds of practitioners: botanic, eclectic, magnetic, and mesmeric. She once travelled to London to consult a renowned spiritual medium. She had fully tested all the patent medicines of the day, including Holloway's ointment, and Cockle's pills, and Mrs. Winslow's soothing syrup, and somebody's chest expanders; and yet—here she was still, not cured; worse than ever. Papa would call her on the sly "My sister Moaner."

But now a wonderful thing occurred. There came into the village hard by a man of medicine, and he set up his tent there for a day or two. He called himself the great "Physio-Eclectic-Magnetic

Healer," and he came heralded by a mighty flourish of trumpets, and by bills as large as life, professing to cure everything. Aunt Mona was in a flutter of hope; she wrote to him to say she was coming, and she took me with her. Her own children were not old enough, and Uncle Butterfield would as soon have paid a visit to the moon.

The great Magnetic Healer was a tall man with a black beard. He solemnly bowed aunt into a big chair, and me to a smaller one.

"I have enjoyed poor health for twenty years," began Aunt Mona in a sighing tone, while the great doctor, sitting before her, looked and listened attentively. "Some of the medical men I have consulted say it must be the lungs, others the liver, others, again, say it is the heart. I say it is all three. They cannot find out any organic disease, they tell me, and they only recommend proper diet, air, and exercise. One of them went so far as to say that all I wanted was cheerfulness. I know better. And so would they if they felt as I feel. I told old Stafford so, our doctor, the other day. My opinion is, that I have a complication of diseases: my lungs are weak, my liver does not act, and I am often terribly pressed for breath, as my niece here, Miss Arkright, can testify to. That, of course, must be the heart."

"Of course," murmured the great Magnetic Healer. "Go on, madam."

"I am troubled perpetually with rheumatic and neuralgic pains, and I have something dreadful in my back. The spine, no doubt. One minute the blood will gallop up and down my veins like a streak of lightning, the next it seems to freeze as if it were so much ice. I have shiverings, and I have bad nights, and I have headache—and altogether I am sure no poor woman was ever so afflicted. *Can* you do anything for me, sir? I believe the heart's the worst."

"Madam," said the great Magnetic Healer, pompously, "that particular form of heart disease has been of frequent occurrence in my practice, and I have been invariably successful in its treatment. Scientifically speaking, your complaint is malformation of the right auricle, and—there *may* be—something a little amiss with the left ventricle. I think perhaps there is. You feel out of spirits, now don't you, often; especially in damp, gloomy weather; and a sort of distaste to everything?"

"Why, doctor, no one before ever told me this!" exclaimed Aunt Mona in ecstasy. "It is *exactly* how I do feel."

"Yes, yes, my dear madam, I could describe your every sensation just as well as though I myself were the sufferer. How is your appetite?"

"Well, it is not to be relied on; but it's mostly very poor. Some days I eat well enough; others I can't touch a thing, and I live then upon strong green tea, or perhaps coffee, and toast-and-butter."

"A most deleterious practice, my dear madam. 'Order is nature's first law,' and it behoves us to be regular in our diet. This capriciousness of appetite arises from the derangement I speak of, and can be easily remedied. Do you sleep well?"

"Good gracious, no, doctor! Not as a rule. How can you expect it? And if I do sleep, I dream. The other night I had a dreadful dream—I thought I saw the ghosts of my two dead brothers who were drowned ten years ago. They were beckoning to me. I awoke in the worst fright possible, screaming and crying."

"And had you gone to bed supperless that night—upon nothing but green tea?"

"Well, no. That night I had managed to eat a morsel of supper and drink a drop of our old ale. Hot pork chops and apple fritters we had, I remember."

The doctor coughed.

"Yes, they beckoned to me distinctly," continued Aunt Mona, returning to the ghosts of her two brothers. "It was a sign, I know, doctor; a warning that I must soon follow them. I feel that I am not long for this world."

"My dear lady, do not despair, I implore you. A life, valuable as yours, must not so early be lost to the world; a sun so brilliant must not go down ere it has attained its meridian splendour. In the hands of an ordinary physician your case would indeed be hopeless; but *my* skill may perhaps avail, even for *you*. I fear, madam, that you are inclined to hysteria. In simpler phrase, that you are nervous."

"No, doctor, I cannot say that I am. I *should* be, if I gave way to my feelings, but that is what I never allow myself to do. My husband at times tells me I am hysterical; but, when I'm dead and gone, he'll know better. He will realise *then* that I was the patientest, uncomplainingest mortal woman that ever breathed. Being so hearty himself, he cannot understand that other people have ailments; and so—and so—all I know is, that I am frightfully ill and get no sympathy." And, with the last words, Aunt Mona covered her face with her handkerchief, and sobbed aloud.

Much affected, the great Magnetic Healer turned away, as if to conceal his emotion. Then, returning to his chair, he spoke in a consoling tone.

"Dry your tears, dear lady; I have the gift of prescience, which assures me that you will live and not die. Although my great reliance in the cure of disease is my wonderful mesmeric and magnetic power; yet, in addition to these, I am possessed of an unrivalled medicine, the secret of whose preparation was communicated to me while in the spiritual-trance state, by the great Galen himself. Take heart. It shall cure you."

"Oh, *if* it could!" cried aunt, dropping her handkerchief. "What medicine is it?"

"It is called the 'Elixir of Life and Universal Panacea.' This small bottle of medicine which I will give you," he added, producing a little white phial filled with a lemon-coloured liquid, "is sufficient to cure any mortal disease, and ——"

"It don't look much of it," interrupted aunt.

"My good lady, it will last you your lifetime. You may take one drop on rising in the morning, one drop at noon, and one drop before retiring at night. Continue this course for a fortnight, then one drop only every other day, until you are cured, will be sufficient."

Pocketing his fee of two guineas, the renowned Magnetic Healer bowed us out, my aunt clasping the treasured bottle.

"What a mercy I went to him!" she cried. "If he had but come here a few years ago! What do you think of him, Maria?"

Now the truth was, I did not think much of him. My impression was, he had been fit to burst out laughing all the time: but it would not do to say so.

"If it cures you, Aunt Mona, it will be a good thing."

Uncle Butterfield took an opportunity of tasting the "Elixir," and privately assured his friends, amidst bursts of laughter, that he could testify to the truth of its being Elixir—Paregoric Elixir, much diluted and flavoured; but that, and nothing else.

But now, a dire misfortune befel this golden remedy. Some few days later Johnny, the youngest of the little ones, aged seven, saw the phial on his mother's dressing-table, got hold of it and drank the whole at a draught.

No evil ensued to Johnny: but his mother was frightfully put out, and Johnny got a whipping. This wonderful Elixir could not have *failed* to cure her; and now it was gone! The great Magnetic Healer was also gone, which made things the more distressing. Our village had not patronised him as he might have expected, considering the wonderful announcement bills, and he had packed up his traps and started, the good genius that presides over the interests of travelling quack doctors alone knew where. For three days Aunt Mona sat on the hearthrug, sobbing.

"It would have been the saving of my life! I see it; I feel and know it. I had confidence in that Elixir. And it must be next to a miracle that that wicked Johnny is not dead! I was *so* much better for the few days I took it! And now I must bear the return of all my old ailments and die! Woe's me!"

And the old ailments did return—as Aunt Mona said; and she made life a burden to herself and everybody about her.

Upon the morning of one of those perfect days, cloudless, serene and balmy, which only the month of June can bring to earth, I took my sewing, and started over to my Aunt Mona's. We lived nearly half a mile distant, in the old Manor House. As I tripped lightly over green meadows, past fragrant orchards and blooming

gardens, laden with the perfumes of "incense-breathing June," I said to myself—"Surely, upon such a day as this, even Aunt Mona must be well and happy."

Ah, vain delusion ! The idea of health and happiness connected with Aunt Mona was simply ridiculous. "Mamma is never happy unless she is perfectly miserable," said her eldest daughter one day, saucy Kate ; and no words of mine could better express the state of things.

Passing through the garden, I found Louisa and Kate, sitting under the arbour of roses and honeysuckles, shelling a dish of early green peas for dinner, and chatting and laughing very merrily. Phillis, the dairymaid, was churning in the out-house and keeping time to the rise and fall of her churn-dasher with the most blithesome of soft melodies. The cat lay in the warm sunshine, purring with satisfaction ; the canary chirruped gleefully in his cage, and little Johnny came running to meet me with sparkling eyes and a merry laugh, and a handful of June roses. All this peace, this rural content, this bright happiness found an echo in my own heart.

"Where is your mistress ?" I said to Sarah, who sat in the best kitchen—for I had gone in the back way.

"Groaning and moaning somewhere about—as she always is, Miss Maria," replied the old nurse, who had lived with them for years, and had a habit of saying what she pleased.

In a little room opening from the dining-parlour I found Aunt Mona, an old woollen shawl around her shoulders, and crouching disconsolately over the grate, in which roared a fire more befitting January than June.

"How do you do, aunt ?" I said. "Are you any worse than usual ?"

She turned towards me a face of despair and woe. Really it was enough to give one the blues only to look at it.

"Ah, my dear, don't ask. I am *miserable*."

"But what makes you so ?"

Aunt Mona gave a deep sigh and bent over the fire again. On the trivet stood a porcelain saucepan, whose contents she was languidly stirring with a spoon.

"Why, aunt, what are you doing there ? Is that a witch's caldron ?"

"It is a decoction of herbs, to be taken inwardly," meekly sighed she. "I got the recipe from the old herb doctor. I sent for him here yesterday, and he gave it me. I am going to try it," she added resignedly ; "and if it does not cure me, I shall just give up medicine, and lie down and die."

"Give up medicine, and arise and live," I answered. "I firmly believe, aunt, that medicine is killing you ; medicine and groaning together."

This aroused Aunt Mona. "Maria, how *can* you talk so, when

nothing *but* medicine has kept me alive these twenty years?" she exclaimed, in righteous indignation.

"You have lived *in spite* of medicine, Aunt Mona, and because your constitution is so thoroughly good. Papa says ——"

"I don't want to hear what your papa says, Maria. Brothers always choose to be rude; even when I was a child he'd hurt my feelings. He is so healthy himself that he has no pity for me."

"You have no pity for yourself, Aunt Mona. Who, but you, would sit over a fire this lovely June day?"

"I am cold, Maria."

"Get up then, aunt, and run about out of doors in the sunshine."

"It's cruel of you to talk so," she whined. "How *can* I stir that awful spine in my back? I *can* stand it from your uncle—he talks to me so, like your papa—but I can't from you. Men are so hard hearted! Don't you ever marry one of them, Maria."

She tapped her foot on the ground, and stirred on, and sighed. Chancing to look out at the window, I saw Uncle Butterfield coming down the garden path with that pretty widow, Mrs. Berrow, who was one of aunt's great friends and had no patience with her. Aunt looked up also.

"There's your uncle, Maria, with that widow Berrow as usual! If he *is* settling up her husband's property, it's no reason why she should be running after him always. If I wasn't the most unsuspecting woman on earth, I *should* be jealous. But I shall not be in the way long; that's one comfort."

A burst of clear, ringing laughter at this moment reached us. It was soon followed by that most comely woman's entrance, "fair, fat, and forty." As she stood by Aunt Mona's side, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed, in the exuberance of health, and the prime of a beauty which time had improved rather than impaired, the contrast was too painful. I think my uncle must have felt it, for he sighed as he turned away.

"Mrs. Butterfield," said the widow, in her soft, musical voice—that 'excellent thing in woman'—"I was hoping, upon this beautiful morning, to find you better."

Aunt Mona gave no immediate reply, save a glance that was not a friendly one. It said as plainly as glance could say, "You don't hope anything of the sort; you want me to die and be out of the way."

"My wife seems to be growing worse," said Uncle Butterfield. "That two-sovereign fee, paid to the great magnetic what-d'ye-call-him, a month ago, didn't seem to do you much good, did it, Mona? It had better have been put into the church poor-box."

"A kind, loving husband ought not to speak of money paid to relieve the sufferings and to save the life of his poor, dying wife," replied Aunt Mona reproachfully. "You know that Johnny, dreadful child, drank the elixir up. But I shall not be a trouble or expense to you long, Thomas: I feel that my days are numbered."

"They have been numbered ever since I knew you," smiled uncle. "The days of all of us are, for that matter."

His wife did not condescend to notice the words. Every now and then she had these mournful fits, and liked to talk them out.

"And when I am gone, Thomas, you can marry some strong, healthy woman, whose ailments won't trouble you. One that's got money too," she added, significantly and spitefully. "Yes, money to make up for all you've had to pay for me."

"I am glad to see you in so desirable a frame of mind," said Mrs. Berrow, laughing merrily. "You show a truly noble, unselfish nature, in providing, even before your death, for your husband's second marriage."

"Now Caroline Berrow, I think you had better not say more," spoke aunt. "I know how unfeeling *you* can be. It is not the first time you have made game of my illness. As to you, Thomas, you can be looking out for somebody to replace me. I and my sufferings will soon be released from this world of trouble."

"Have you any particular person in view?" asked uncle gravely, "anyone you would like as a mother to your children? Of course I should have to think a little of them in choosing a second wife."

I don't much think Aunt Mona expected the ready acquiescence; she looked startled. Mrs. Berrow ran out to Kate and Louisa, who were coming in with the basin of peas, and uncle followed her. Presently the two girls came in. Aunt Mona was then growing hysterical.

"Listen, children," she cried—and proceeded to tell them what had passed. "You see, your father is so anxious on your account," she added sarcastically, "that he can't even wait for me to die before providing you a step-mother. I will let *you* choose. How would you like Mrs. Berrow?"

"Very much indeed," said Kate.

"I think she is just as good, and sweet, and pretty as she can be!" cried Louisa. "Mamma, I like Mrs. Berrow almost as well as I like you. But I suppose this is all nonsense," broke off the girl, laughing.

"To tell you the truth, Mona," interposed my uncle, who had again come in, "I *have* thought of Caroline Berrow. It is impossible to keep such ideas away when one's wife is in your state of health," he added with deprecation. "She would make a most excellent step-mother."

"Yes, I see you have been thinking of her," returned Aunt Mona, rising from her chair in a fever of hysterical anger. "You have got your plans well laid out, husband, and you have infected the children with them. Oh, that I should live to be insulted like this! Maria, you are a witness to it. It is cruel, cruel! And I will live a hundred years if I can, just to spite you."

With the tears streaming down her still pretty face, Aunt Mona, leaving her decoction of herbs to its fate, sailed away. I felt most uncomfortable. The young girls must have been jesting, but for the first time I thought my uncle heartless. Mrs. Berrow, standing now outside the open window, had partly heard what passed.

"Mona only told me yesterday that she could not live a week," quoth she.

"She kissed me last Sunday when I was going to church and said she should not live to see another," spake uncle.

"Yes, and she has not yet bought us new dresses, or hats, or ribbons this summer," chimed in Kate. "She said it would be useless, we should so soon have to go into mourning for her. It is too bad for mamma to be so melancholy."

"And *now she is going to live a hundred years*," sighed Mrs. Berrow, in anything but a pleasurable tone. "But I must wish you all good morning. I have not ordered my dinner at home yet."

"Uncle Butterfield," I said, feeling indignant, as the echo of her light footsteps sounded on the path and the two girls ran after her, "I—I have no right, I know, to speak so; but do you not think you are heartless to Aunt Mona—unfeeling?"

"I am sorry for it, if I am," replied my uncle, "but I'm only taking your aunt at her word. For years she has been telling me she was going to die, and that I had better be looking out for a second wife. I don't see that I could choose a nicer one than Mrs. Berrow."

"Has she bewitched you, Uncle Butterfield?"

"I don't think so, my lass. All the world recognizes her for a delightful woman. The children must have a mother, if their own is taken from them. What should I do without a wife in a house like this? As to planning-out beforehand—you must thank your aunt for that."

He set off down the garden with his long strides to overtake Mrs. Berrow. Sending the girls back, he accompanied her home. I could have beaten them both.

Up stairs ran I, somehow not caring to face the girls, to Aunt Mona's room, expecting to find her drowned in hysterical tears, and sorely in need of consolation. Not a bit of it. She sat before a mirror, arranging her still abundant and beautiful hair, which, during these years of illness, real or imaginary, she had worn plainly tucked under a cap. There was a fire in her eye, a flush upon her cheek, and a look of determination in her face, which augured anything but well for the prospects of the Widow Berrow.

"I've heard every word you have been saying below," she exclaimed angrily, glancing at the open window. "I thank you for taking my part, Maria. You seem to be the only friend I have. The idea of that mean, low-lived, contemptible Widow Berrow being here in *my* place, and the mother of *my* children! If I were dead and buried, and she came as Thomas's wife, I'd rise from my grave

and haunt her. But, *I'm not dead yet*; no, and I don't intend to be, while that miserable jade walks the earth. I suppose she paints and powders to make herself look young and fair, for she's every day as old as I am; and, when we were girls together, she was not half as handsome as I was. Mark you that, Maria."

"She does not paint or use powder, aunt; I am sure of that; though she does look so fresh and young."

"She is eight-and-thirty this summer, and she does not look eight-and-twenty," snapped Aunt Mona. "And I, with my years of suffering, look eight-and-forty."

"Yes, aunt, and your perpetual sufferings have brought on the look of age. If I were you, I'd throw them off and grow young again. You might if you would. I remember how fresh and pretty you used to be, and how proud Uncle Thomas was of you."

"I *will* be so again," cried aunt resolutely, in an access of temper—"if it's only to disappoint that upstart woman. I'll throw off all my ailments, though I die in the effort, and be as young as she is."

"Aunt—Aunt Mona—I want to ask you not to be offended at some plain truths I am going to tell you. Your illness, during all these years, has been more imaginary than real; your natural nervousness has rendered you an easy prey to quack doctors and patent medicine vendors, who have had no regard to your health, but only to your husband's money. You have given way to your fancies and gone about like an old woman, the greatest figure imaginable. Look at your gown this morning; look at the cap you have now put off! You might be well if you would."

"Perhaps, after all, old Stafford may be right when he tells me I have no organic disease," said she, sadly.

"Yes, indeed he is; and now I want you to promise me never to take another drop of medicine unless prescribed by him."

"I never will."

"And oh, Aunt Mona, try to be cheerful, and to make home a happy place for your husband and children. Think how terrible it would be to lose their love."

"It seems to me that I have lost their love," was the despairing reply.

"No, I hope not; no indeed, Aunt Mona. They are just a little tired of your constant complainings—and I must say I don't wonder at it. Even the servants are tired. Think how long it is since you had a cheerful word upon your lips or a smile upon your face! If you would only be the loving wife and mother again, things would come right."

"All the same, Maria, you cannot deny that Caroline Berrow has turned out a deceitful crocodile. Think of her display of friendship for me, up to this very morning! Think of her setting her ugly widow's cap at your uncle before I am dead!"

"But you know, aunt, you have been as good as dead—in speech. Telling them, week in, week out, that you shall be in your coffin the next!"

"Well, child," she said, rather faintly, "I *have* been ill, I *have* suffered."

"Put your sufferings off, aunt; you can, I say, if you like; and circumvent—pardon the word—the widow and her cap-setting. Think how much you owe to God for all the many blessings He has showered down upon you—and how ungrateful it is to return Him nothing but repinings."

Aunt Mona, brushing out her still beautiful hair, paused. A flush stole over her face.

"I never thought of it in that light, Maria," she softly said. "I will think of it; I will try."

And she began forthwith. That very evening she dressed herself up and went to the penny-reading concert, taking Kate and Louisa. Uncle Butterfield was there, sitting beside Mrs. Berrow. My mother, all unconscious of the treason, crossed the room to sit with them; I went to Aunt Mona. We all went home together as far as our several ways led us; and though uncle did see the widow home, aunt did not begin moaning again.

How wonderfully from that time her appearance and manner changed, you would hardly believe. She grew young again; she grew cheerful. Cheerful and more cheerful day by day. Her dress was studied, her servants, household, and children were actively cared for. She took to visit again and to go to church on Sundays; she invited friends to little parties at home. The pills and herbs and physicks and decoctions were pitched away, and the bottles sold by old Sarah. Uncle Thomas was charmingly sunny-tempered in the house, as he always had been—but he did not give up his visits to the Widow Berrow.

"But he will in time, Maria," said aunt privately to me, a world of confident hope in her voice. "Only yesterday, he smoothed my hair down with his gentle hand and said I looked as young and pretty in his eyes as I did the day we were married."

"Yes, aunt, you are *winning* him back, you see. I knew it would be so."

"And oh, child, I am so much happier than I used to be, with all my pains and my nerves and my lowness of spirits gone!"

It was a month or two after this, all things having been going on in the nicest possible way, that Mrs. Berrow one cold morning, for December had come in, presented herself in Aunt Mona's parlour, a smile on her ever-pleasant face. I was there, helping aunt with the things intended for the Christmas-tree. She had not had a tree for years. Not been "able" to have one, she used to say. Uncle Thomas had told her laughingly this year not to spare the money over it.

Mrs. Berrow, coming in, I say, with her bright face, went straight up to aunt, and kissed her. Aunt Mona did colour a little at that.

"I am come to ask you to my house for the 6th of January," she said. "You, Mona, and your husband, and the two girls. Your mamma has already her invitation, Maria, and yours too," she added, nodding at me.

"Is it a tea party?" questioned Aunt Mona, stiffly.

"No: a breakfast. And I hope you will attend me to church beforehand—and see me married."

"Married!" I cried, staring at her.

"Yes, my dear. I have been engaged these many months past," she answered with equanimity. "It is to my cousin Stanton—a very distant cousin as you know. We should have been married before, but for that business which took him to Spain. And when he got there, he found he was obliged to go on to Valparaiso. There he was detained again. Altogether it is nearly six months since he left England, but he is back now."

"And—you have been engaged to marry him all that while!" gasped aunt in her surprise.

"All that while, and longer. Since last April. Your husband has known it from the first."

"Oh, Caroline!"

"And has been transacting all kinds of business for us both, preparatory to the marriage."

"Why did you not tell me?"

Caroline Berrow laughed.

"Then—was that—that nonsense that you and Thomas talked together—about—about your succeeding *me* a joke?"

"Why, of course it was, you silly thing. As if your husband could have cared for me, or I for him—in that way. He has never cared, he never will care, for anyone but his wife, Mona."

Aunt Mona burst into happy tears, and put her face down upon her old friend's neck to sob them away.

We all went to the wedding on the sixth, and Uncle Butterfield, looking so bright and sunny, gave the bride away. But neither of them told Aunt Mona what *I* learnt—that the plot was concocted between them to bring her to her senses.

And it did it, as you have seen. And there never was a woman more free from "nerves" and imaginary aches and pains than Aunt Mona is now. "I thank God for it every day of my life, Maria," she whispers to me sometimes. And I think we all do.



THE LADY'S WELL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

I.

IN a retired part on the border of Wales, one little frequented and little known, are to be seen the remains of an ancient well, or fountain. Shrubs withered and stunted now, and dark with age, but once green and beautiful, cluster round the brink, and though it is, and has been for ages, dry, it still bears the name of "The Lady's Well." A stately castle once rose near the spot; all remains of it have long passed away, but that it must have been of some repute and beauty in its time, an ancient guide-book of the locality will bear witness to. A copy of this guide-book is rare now. One fell into the hands of the author, and from that book we will quote, with the reader's permission, part of its description of this same Castle of Chillingwater. It must be premised, however, that this account is but the copy of another copy, for the ancient book states that all traces of the Castle of Chilling having long passed away, the compiler has been indebted for his information to some manuscripts of vellum, yellow with age, found in the archives of a neighbouring monastery when it was destroyed in the time of Henry VIII. And so antiquated was the language of this parchment, that much difficulty occurred in translating it into more modern English.

"From the pile of ruins alone visible to us now," quotes the guide-book, "none can form an adequate idea of the strength and might of the Castle of Chillingwater, when it was in the height of its glory: its many turrets and proud battlements; its lofty terraces and well-apportioned halls; its marble-pillared reception rooms and magnificent chambers; its spacious courts and ramparts of defence. Its domains stood unrivalled in the land. Think, children (so runneth the record on the vellum), of the sunny land of the East, whose beauties seem to us but as some gorgeous painting. Picture to yourselves the delicious Cashmere, the described wonders of which lovely valley sound to us but as a fable: where the sweet air is one ineffable essence of perfume, the flowers spread the earth as of an embroidery of many colours, and the nightingales with their sweet voices never tire; where the grateful clime, more generous than Italia's balmy one, is of no capricious brightness, and the ever-blue sky sheds joy around. Not inferior to these foreign fables was the valley of Chilling. It will be well if our poor description can give to posterity an adequate notion of its loveliness; of its orangeries, which seemed to have no end; of its conservatories, so extensive that they appeared to have no beginning; its grottoes of curious

devices ; its intricate mazes, or labyrinths ; its splendid aviaries ; its groves of pines and acacias ; its clusters of Eastern shrubs and flowers, where the brilliantly-plumaged birds, imported from other climes, thinking they must be in their own sunny country, flew not away ; and its far-famed Holy Well, the which was said to possess healing properties to those who would drink of its waters. And who shall tell of the splendours of the surrounding landscape, daily rejoicing the eye of the gladdened spectator ? The mountains, with the varied hues of their luxuriant herbage, on which the flocks grazed ; the dark woods and the bright-green plains ; the cascades and waterfalls that pleased the eye and soothed the ear ; and the picturesque cottages of the serfs and vassals ! Who shall describe all this for a later age ? Who shall enlarge upon the glories of the once-famed stronghold of Chilling ? Surely the pen of a solitary and humble monk is inadequate to it."

Now this holy monk, however inadequate his pen was to his task, must have been a man of vivid imagination, and must have drawn largely upon it, when enumerating the praises of this long-passed-away Welsh domain. When the reader shall have perused the legend, to which we now pass on, a question may arise in his mind whether the recording monk may not have been Geoffry, Baron of Chillingwater : whiling away the hours of his old age in his long-endured solitude, and garrulous over the glories that once were his.

It was as far back as the twelfth century, at the close of the reign of that Plantagenet whose history is connected, in schoolboys' minds, with Fair Rosamond, a bowl of poison, Queen Eleanor, and the rebellious princes, that a lovely child, scarcely yet twelve years old, reclined on one of the terraces of the Castle of Chillingwater. It was the Lady Ellana de Chilling, the only daughter of that ancient house. She was being reared at home, contrary to the very common custom, at that time, of bringing up young ladies in nunneries. Pacing the same terrace at a distance, were her father and mother, the old baron grey with years, and his still young and handsome wife. Their only son, several years older than the Lady Ellana, was away from home, engaged in some one of the many petty wars that disturbed this period. The baron had opposed his son's departure, representing that he was yet full young to engage in these fiery conflicts, and hinting that some of the nobility had been thus cut off in the flower of their youth. But the lad refused to listen, and had rushed off, boy-like—*boy-like* !—full of excitement and ardour, his head and his tongue running wild with visions of glory and renown.

"I shall come home with my sword all reeking with the blood of our enemies, Ella," he had boasted to his sister, when on the eve of departure ; "and it shall be hung up in our hall of trophies. I will show them what a De Chilling is made of. Wilt thou not wish me good luck, Ellana ?"

"I will wish thee God speed, brother dear," she answered, in a

saddened tone. "But who will be my companion when thou art gone?"

"Tush! tush!" returned the hot young warrior; "I am too old to waste my time in companionship with a girl: even with thee, Ella. I am above it now. A youth who goes forth to fight for his king and country, would blush to think of it. Our cousins must be thy companions in my stead."

"But Edgar is always away with his hawks and his falcons," sighed the Lady Ellana.

"Geoffry is not," retorted the lad.

"Geoffry never stirs from that book-reading of his," resumed the maiden, with a curl of her lip. "It would give me the brow-ache only to look at his parchments, Reginald."

The cousins spoken of by the heir of Chillingwater were the orphan sons of the baron's only brother. They were being educated in the castle, and had no inheritance, save their father's honoured name and his good sword. The younger, Edgar, would, to all appearance, wield it bravely; but the elder, Geoffry, promised to be that most despised character in the barbarous ages, a bookworm. Even the old baron, his uncle, who was by no means of a fierce nature, as natures went then, used to rate him angrily, fling his written-book out of his hand, and tell him he would be fit for nothing but a puny monk. Geoffry, after these scenes, would arouse himself, and for a whole week, perhaps, accompany his brother to his fierce out-door sports; hunting boars, tracking game; or join in his martial exercises; returning then to his clerkly studies with more zest than ever. You cannot change a boy's nature. Education and circumstances may do much, but they will never wholly change it: and, as it is in these days, so it was in those.

The young baron in prospective departed from his father's house, at the head of his squires and his pages, and his retinue of retainers, as it was the custom for young barons in prospective to do. And the Lady Ellana, sitting on the terrace, as we have seen her, was wondering when they should hear news of him. He had been gone two months, and rumours had reached them of a petty engagement having been fought, in which it was probable he had been engaged. The young girl was picturing to herself happy dreams—of her brother Reginald coming back victorious, thundering across the drawbridge, and waving his sword over his head in token of laurels and victory: dreaming that he flew to her with embraces, whispering that he had had enough of glory for the present, and would stay at home and be her companion as before. Unconsciously she drew to the edge of the terrace, and looked down, perhaps with the hope of seeing him. The strong bridge was drawn securely up, and there were no signs in all the landscape of Reginald and his followers. But in a shady nook of the luxuriant gardens was stretched her cousin Geoffry de Chilling, poring over a roll of his learned parchment; and the good monk, his

tutor, looked on by his side. There was a wide difference in the personal appearance of the two brothers. Geoffry was slight and fair, with a mild, thoughtful countenance, and a look of delicate health; whilst Edgar was a tall, active boy, possessing noble features glowing with youth, and eyes dark and brilliant.

The Lady Ellana saw her cousin sitting there, idly studying away his hours: further away, she could catch the form of his brother Edgar, and her eyes and thoughts rested on the latter. He was never still: boys of fourteen being much the same then that they are now. Now, coaxing his dogs; now, teasing them, till nothing but barks and howls were heard; now, vaulting, leaping, and flinging stones at every object within reach; and now, darting into the stables. With his disappearance, the little girl returned to her thoughts about her brother, and as her eyes once more ranged over the domain, she caught sight of some horsemen advancing at a quick pace. So engaged had she been, watching Edgar, that they had advanced passably near, unperceived. She bent her head down and strained her eyes, for, in the form of the first, she thought she recognised her brother's squire. In another moment, she had darted up to her parents, and taking a hand of each, was dragging them forward that they might see the horsemen.

"They bring news of Reginald! I know they bring news of Reginald!" she exclaimed. "Note you not, sir, the device in the squire's helmet? But he rides with his visor down."

The old baron trembled as the horsemen drew near enough for recognition. They were in complete armour, but he saw their badges as retainers of his house. And they still kept their helmets closed! This, in those olden times, was, in some cases, looked upon as a token that the messengers had bad news to tell. Had those gentlemen brought good tidings to the baron, who, they knew, was hoping for them, they would have thrown back their closed helmets, and joyfully waved their swords as they drew near to him.

Poor Reginald de Chilling! he who had gone forth in all the enthusiasm of his youth, had met with death on his first battlefield. The old baron seated himself in his hall of audience, his nephews standing by his side, and his gentlemen-attendants gathered behind him. The baroness had retired with her daughter: she was not less anxious to hear the tidings than her husband, but much needless form and ceremony was observed in the days of the Plantagenets.

The chief of the messengers came in the instant he left his horse, his armour clanking as he walked, and his visor still down. He raised it as he approached the baron, displaying a face working with emotion. He was a white-haired man of nearly fifty years of age, and had been page to the baron in his early life. He knew not how to break the news to his revered master.

"My son?" gasped the old noble to him, holding out his hand; "what tidings of my son?"

The squire spoke slowly, but he accomplished his sentences at last, and the baron knew the worst. His boy was left dead on the battlefield. With a low moan of pain he arose from his seat, and, laying his hand upon the shoulder of his elder nephew, to support himself, passed from the room in search of his lady-wife. Edgar followed.

"What of my son?" uttered the baroness, starting forward and trembling, as she saw the pained countenance of her husband.

"Madam," was his answer, pushing Geoffry slightly forwards, "we have no heir now but this. Our glorious boy has died his death on the engagement-field."

The little girl, Ellana, heard the words, and, giving a sudden cry, burst into a passionate fit of weeping. The baron was occupied in soothing his shocked and startled wife; the new heir of Chillingwater, bewildered with grief and amazement, wept silently, and chafed the lady's hands; but Edgar de Chilling folded the sobbing girl to his breast, and whispered that he would be her brother now in the lost one's stead, her loving brother for ever and ever.

The old baron passed away to his forefathers, dying more of grief than of age, and the castle, with all its honours, became the property of Geoffry, now the Baron of Chillingwater. A very small portion indeed of its revenues fell to the baroness and her daughter, for incomes, in that early period, could not be bequeathed as they can now. The lady retained her place in the castle as its mistress, constituting herself guardian of the young baron and his brother. And the years passed on.

As the heir advanced towards manhood, his character and inclination for martial or boisterous pursuits did not seem to strengthen. His mood was invariably so kind and gentle, his heart so pliant, and his health so fragile, that they would have best become a woman. He would recline for hours together by the side of his cousin, in listless idleness, telling her charming stories, twisting wreaths for her, listening to her girlish songs. But she—oh the perverseness of woman's heart! perverse in those days as in these—would better value five minutes spent with her by the daring and handsome Edgar, than all the hours wasted with her by his inert brother. The lady-mother had a project in her head, and the reader has no difficulty in divining it. She would have despatched, with all speed, the younger brother from the castle, for she dreaded his influence over the heart of Ellana, and, when the fitting time came, she would marry her daughter to the baron. But to drive Edgar out of the castle in his boyhood was more than the Baroness of Chillingwater, with all her influence, could accomplish, for the brothers were deeply attached to each other, and the young baron would as soon have thought of turning out her ladyship as of turning out Edgar.

II.

THE years, I say, passed on. Richard Cœur de Lion sat on the throne of his father, and England was alive with the excitement of the Crusade war. The king was on his way to join it, and the young and the chivalrous amongst the Anglo-Saxon and Norman nobility were flocking after his steps.

The Baron of Chillingwater had now attained his majority, and the Lady Ellana was growing towards womanhood. The light of a summer's evening shone down upon her parted hair, its waving curls were reflected in the waters of the Holy Well, on the brink of which she stood, thoughtfully leaning against a tree. What were her thoughts gathering on? On the clerk-like baron, who was now in his room in the western turret, deep in his studies? We cannot say; but as a quick and light, though manly step, was heard approaching, a colour, as of the richest damask-rose, flew to her cheek. He was a handsome knight, Edgar de Chilling, and as he stood there by her side and rattled on, talking of any subject that took his fancy, it may be fair to infer that Ellana thought him one.

Suddenly, the bell rang out for the evening meal. He gallantly offered her his arm, and they slowly walked together to the castle. The baroness saw them, and her face became black as night.

"What meaneth this inertness?" suddenly broke forth the lady-mother, as the spice-cup went round after supper; "know you not, young sirs, that I shall have to blush for my kinsmen?"

The baron looked dreamily up; but young Edgar, hot and passionate, asked what he had done that she should blush for him.

"It is what you have *not* done that I blush for," returned the lady, with a cheek as fiery and a tongue as hasty as his own. "The baron's pursuits lie in a different way, and his place is here, but that a younger scion of the house of Chilling should hold back when it is the pleasure of the king and the glory of England that her youth should engage in the holy wars—that you, Edgar de Chilling, should remain here, perhaps in cowardice——"

"Hold, madam!" exclaimed Edgar, starting up in anger, and laying his hand upon his sword.

"The lady-mother means not that," interposed the baron, with his quiet, persuasive voice. "Something has angered you, madam, and your words must have sounded harshly in my brother's ear, but I know you meant them not. Be calm, be seated, Edgar."

"I mean what I say," repeated the baroness, her temper rising with her words. "The good name of Chilling is becoming a reproach in the land. Where is there a noble house who has not a son, if old enough, engaged in the holy war? But Edgar de Chilling keeps aloof. My brave son was away from home in his early youth."

"And lost his life!" interposed the Lady Ellana, who, hitherto pale with surprise and terror, now burst into a flood of tears.

"You are right, madam," called out Edgar to the baroness. "I see now that I am one too many here: but I have truly been unpardonably supine, and I take shame to myself that you should have had to point out to me my duty to my king and to my religion. With to-morrow's sun, I shall be on my way to the Holy Land."

"Not so," interrupted the baron, eagerly clasping the young knight's hand—"not until you can go as befiteth Edgar de Chilling and my brother. If you indeed wish to join these holy wars, whither so many of our nobles are flocking, I will not say you nay; but you shall not leave until your equipage and retinue are complete."

"I will go with my own good sword, nothing more," returned Edgar. "Nothing else belongs to me, by gain or by inheritance, and nothing else will I take. If I win myself a name and station, I will wear them. To-morrow, at break of day, I bid adieu to Chillingwater."

Half-an-hour later, they were standing within the porch of the little chapel, near to the eastern gate, Edgar de Chilling and the Lady Ellana. She had wandered thither, after that turbulent supper-scene, and he had followed her. The lady-mother, elate at having accomplished her purpose, and knowing that the baron's dreaded rival, dreaded by her, would now be removed, sent her vigilance to sleep, and sat discussing matters with the baron and her confessor.

As they stood there in the dusk of the evening twilight, Ellana thought her heart was breaking. Dreams of Edgar de Chilling had interwoven themselves with every later year of her existence; and now he was going away, perhaps for ever, like her dead brother. Impassioned vows were uttered between them. Never before had Edgar spoken to her of his love; but enough was spoken then.

"You will be my brother's wife, Ellana," was his resentful exclamation. "Ere I can return, you will be my brother's wife."

She turned from him in her hasty anger.

"Yes," he repeated. "Not perhaps of your own free consent; but look at the lady-mother's imperious control: what she will, she accomplishes. For what else, think you, am I sent away? She dreads my presence here; she knows I love you. No, no, Ellana! we may say adieu this night for ever, for I repeat that you will be cajoled into becoming the baron's wife; and when once that has taken place, I shall never return."

"I never will!" she cried, clinging to him in her tempest of tenderness and despair. "Edgar! I will be your wife if you will—your wife this night. Who shall part us then?"

Great blame attached to them both: to one as much as to the other. The Lady Ellana, whose will and temper were by nature as ungovernable as her mother's, made the suggestion in a moment of excitement, and Edgar de Chilling seized upon it, and, on the

instant, sought means to carry it out. Fate seemed to favour their plan.

A monk, Father Thomas, half childish with age, who had admittance to the castle at all hours, like many of his brethren, passed, as they were speaking, the little chapel, on his way to the adjoining monastery. He had known and loved them both from their early years. It did not take much persuasion to induce him to unite them. The moonlight fell in upon them from the Gothic openings, called windows, as they stood before the altar of the chapel—that child-bride of seventeen summers, and her cousin, who had barely numbered two years more. In spite of her excitement and her resolution, the Lady Ellana was agitated and trembling. She scarcely knew that she spoke the required vows; her fears of an interruption were overwhelming, and her head was perpetually turning to see that the chapel entrance was not darkened by any unwelcome form. Marriages concluded in haste such as this, cannot be stopped for ceremony: the Lady Ellana happened to have on her hand a ring set with a single garnet stone, and this was made to serve for the nuptial ring. But it was too large for the third finger, and as she turned from the altar after receiving the aged priest's benediction, it dropped from her hand upon the chapel floor. She stooped to feel for it; it was too dark to see; Edgar stooped; the priest stooped. But they could not find it, and after waiting as long as they dared, were leaving the chapel, when the Lady Ellana set her foot upon it. She picked it up, and they took it outside, and examined it, in the moonlight. The garnet stone was gone, and although the Lady Ellana looked for it times upon times afterwards, it was never found again. Edgar de Chilling took her hand, and replaced the ring on it, but she burst into tears, and hid her face on his shoulder. "It is a bad omen," she whispered.

He kept his word to the lady-mother, and departed, on the following day, for the wars.

III.

Who so gay as the Lady Ellana de Chilling? who so lauded in ballad, praised in song? who so beautiful, who so courted? She had seemed strangely sad and abstracted after the departure of her cousin Edgar; a smile was scarcely to be seen on her face for months, no, not for months upon months. The baroness, her mother, became irritated, if not alarmed, at her continued gloom, and began to fear that her love for Edgar de Chilling was deeper than she had suspected. So she took her to court, where the graceless Lackland reigned for his brother, and she took her out to visit amongst the nobles of the land, and she filled the castle of Chillingwater with courtly guests: and the Lady Ellana, at twenty years of age, looked back, repentantly, upon the one rash act of her life, and said to her own heart that she had done a foolish thing.

She had loved and mourned her husband for a long while after his departure, but as the months and *years* succeeded each other, and she heard no news from him, her affection began to die away. She was fond of show and expense, she delighted in display, she was vain of her beauty; and now that, through her more intimate knowledge of the outer world, she had been shown how necessary to her happiness it was that she should enjoy all the pomps and vanities of life, she trembled lest Edgar de Chilling should return, and proclaim that she was but the wife of a poor soldier.

The lady-mother looked on with a vigilant eye; but, with all her clear-sightedness, she never suspected the truth. She did believe that vows, the vows of lovers, promising fidelity and all that, had been exchanged between her daughter and Edgar de Chilling; and she suspected that the Lady Ellana now repented of those vows, but that, for her word's sake, she scrupled to release herself from them. And she laid her plans accordingly.

The Castle of Chillingwater was alive with gaiety, crowded with visitors. The baron was the great focus of attraction. Some admired his learning; many, his suavity of temper; all, his magnificent pomp and state. Splendid entertainments, sumptuous feasts, brilliant pageantry; for all these was the Castle of Chillingwater celebrated. Now there would be a grand hunting party, now a tournament: and his guests were not slow to ask themselves for whom these pleasures were kept up. Surely not for himself, with his simple tastes and book-lore? No, no; the baron's heart and the baron's hopes, his lavish expenditure and far-renowned pageantry, were cast at the feet of the gaiety-loving Lady Ellana.

It was when one of these festive meetings was at its height, that a servitor whispered the lady-mother of a newly-arrived minstrel, who desired speech of the baron. The same imperious command which distinguished the baroness when, in her lord's lifetime, she was indeed mistress of the castle, was displayed still: *she* controlled the household; the supine baron had but secondary authority. Hence, probably, arose her ardent desire of seeing her daughter wedded to him, for she was aware that should he bring home any other wife, her reign there would be at an end.

"Do you dare to disturb me now, with your idle tales?" she exclaimed to the servitor. "A minstrel, forsooth! are not visits from such common enough? Send him about his business."

"Lady," answered the man, "he is fresh from Palestine. His anxiety to see the baron is great, and I misdoubt me but he brings news of my lord's brother."

The lady's tone was changed now. "Conduct him to my private audience-chamber," she whispered. "And, hark ye, sirrah! *speed* and *silence*."

"What want ye with me?" inquired the lady-mother, as she reached her audience-chamber, and the minstrel bent low before her.

"Lady, I would crave speech of the renowned Baron of Chillingwater."

"The baron grants not audiences. I am as himself—as his mother. Speak out, an ye are from Palestine. What tidings bring you of Edgar de Chilling?"

"Glad tidings, good my lady," answered the harper, with a lowly reverence. "Foremost in the field, bravest in the fight, wisest in the counsel, is Sir Edgar de Chilling. Conspicuous is he amongst knights for all princely qualities; his name is renowned through all the land of Palestine, the handsome, the gay, the fearless. And he charged me to see his brother, the learned Baron of Chillingwater, should my life be spared to penetrate so far as this, and to tell him that when Sir Edgar came home, it should be with the honours befitting a knight of the ancient house of Chilling."

The lady-mother leaned her head upon her hand. Her perplexity and abstraction were great.

"The brave Sir Edgar also charged me with a word to the fair daughter of the house; the Lady Ellana, I bethink me he called her."

"Peace, man!" interrupted the baroness fiercely; and the harper bowed his head to the ground, and was silent.

"Are you very poor?" she asked, at length; "are you in distress?"

"Scarcely in distress, good my lady, but few can be poorer. Save my harp, I have nothing. Not a coin in the whole world, not a change of raiment do I possess. And thankful to our blessed Lady am I, when my minstrelsy obtains for me a sustaining meal: at the stately castle, or the humble hut, I am alike grateful for it."

"This must be a precarious mode of existence," rejoined the baroness. "If you consent to do me a trifling service, I will bestow upon you that which will ensure you full meals for twelve months to come."

"I would do anything for that," spoke the minstrel, eagerly raising his half-famished looks.

And that night it was told, all over the castle, that Sir Edgar de Chilling had lost his life in the Holy Land.

"And so," cried the Baroness of Chillingwater to her daughter, as they sat alone some time during the period of the mourning for Sir Edgar, "our kinsman seeks a bride in the Norman house of Fitzosborne. It is as I prophesied."

"Madam, what mean you?" inquired the Lady Ellana, hastily.

"Are my words incomprehensible, daughter? The Baron of Chillingwater, your cousin and my nephew, brings home the Lady Millicent Fitzosborne. A lovely Norman, but portionless. But the head of the De Chillings requires not a dowry with his wife. Thou hast been a very fool, Ellana."

Perhaps the Lady Ellana thought so, for she bent her head over the tapestry she was working, and answered not.

"Think of the home you enjoy here. Look from the turret windows, and scan the rich domain; remember the life of gaiety that you have passed: and then picture the existence we must drag on in some obscure retreat, in a convent, mayhap, when by the baron's marriage we are turned from hence. Thou hast been a bitter fool, Ellana."

And ere many days had elapsed, it was known in the household that, not Millicent Fitzosborne was to be the bride of the young baron, but the Lady Ellana de Chilling.

IV.

THE Lady Ellana stood before her mirror on her bridal morning, brightly blushing at the lovely form, enshrined in all its veils and laces, reflected there.

Her favourite attendant handed her her gloves; but, before Ellana put them on, she drew from one of the fingers of her left hand a stoneless ring. Her mother had once marvelled at her wearing an old broken jewel, but the young lady replied that she chose to wear it; it was a charm. A blush, far deeper than any her vain feelings had conjured up, rose to her cheeks now, as she dropped the stoneless ring into her jewel-bag. It was the first time it had left her finger.

"This is a joyous morning, my lady," whispered the attendant, speaking with the privilege of a faithful and valued servant. "I did once fear that you were waiting for Sir Edgar. Noble though in qualities he might be, he was not in a position to win the Lady Ellana de Chilling."

"He was my dear cousin," exclaimed the lady. "And you, Bertha, need not have brought up his name to excite sad thoughts to-day. We shall never see him more."

"Do not make sure of that, lady," was the significant answer.

"What do you mean?" cried the startled girl.

"I have said more than I ought," murmured the woman. "I think my tongue has run mad this morning."

But it was not a vain excuse that could satisfy the Lady Ellana. Now, she used passionate entreaty; now, imperious command; and the serving-woman at length disclosed all she knew. The minstrel, it appeared, had partaken too freely of the baron's good ale ere leaving the castle; and had disclosed to Mistress Bertha, who had closeted herself with him to learn full particulars about her favourite Sir Edgar, that the knight was no more dead than she was.

"Did you tell my mother of this?" gasped the Lady Ellana.

Bertha's private opinion was, that the lady-mother knew it all without her telling, and so she hinted to her young mistress. She had attempted to tell her, she observed, but had been stopped by a

torrent of anger on the part of the baroness, who forbade her ever to allude to the subject again.

"Do you think Sir Edgar is dead or alive?" asked the Lady Ellana, every nerve in her body shaking.

"I truly believe that Sir Edgar is alive," answered the tire-woman.

The Lady Ellana swept, in her flowing bridal attire, and with her face white as ashes, into an inner room, where she could be alone. What was to be her course? Should she fling off these rich garments, these sparkling jewels, and go and proclaim to the baron, and his lofty guests, that she was already a wife? "He *may* be dead," she argued to herself, in agony—"this dreadful fear may be but a drunken dream of that gabbling minstrel's. Or, if not dead—he is in the thick of the battlefield, and may never return hither."

Manners and morals, in those early times, were infinitely less exalted than they are now; nevertheless, the Lady Ellana sinned deeply, so they said afterwards, when she went down, that day, as the young unwedded maiden Ellana de Chilling, and knelt at the altar, and vowed to be unto the baron a true and faithful wife.

V.

LONG were the wedding festivities kept up—for weeks. The baron held open house: noble guests crowded in the spacious chambers, inferior visitors revelled in the retainers' hall. But one evening a guest, different from any the castle had yet received, rattled over the lowered drawbridge, followed by his squire and other retainers. His horse was caparisoned sumptuously, and his armour that which was only worn by knights of noble degree. It was the brave Sir Edgar de Chilling.

"Our Lady be good to us!" screamed one of the ancient servitors, trembling violently as he recognised the badge of the young knight. "Is it the apparition of your noble self, Sir Edgar?—or did you not fall, as we heard, in the wars?"

"Fall in the wars!" echoed Sir Edgar, with his own bright laugh. "If I fell in them, my good Stephen, I rose again. How is the baron, my noble brother? and—and the Lady Ellana? You seem to be in the height of revelry here."

"All are well, good Sir Edgar. And for the sound of revelry that you hear, the festivities held in honour of our lord's marriage are not yet over."

"Ah, ah!" laughed the knight; "so my good brother has mated, has he! And pray with whom?"

"With none other than the fairest flower in the land, the Lady Ellana," returned the servitor.

"Pooh, pooh, old man, you are growing deaf and childish," interrupted Sir Edgar, with his old impetuosity. "I asked," he continued, raising his voice, "with whom it is that my brother has wedded."

"Gramercy, good Sir Knight, I heard your question," replied the

servitor, deprecatingly. "My lord has wedded his cousin, the Lady Ellana de Chilling."

Sir Edgar stood speechless for an instant, and then strode on. The youthful Baroness of Chillingwater, lovely in her costly white robes and her flowing hair, was the centre of a knot of guests, when he entered. He threw back his helmet and advanced to her, his handsome features white with agitation. She gave a shrill scream, and made as if she would have rushed away, but he held her with an iron grasp.

"My brave brother! my lost brother!" uttered the baron, advancing to embrace him. "Our Lady be praised for this! We mourned you as dead."

"Edgar de Chilling alive!" stammered the lady-mother. "Sir Edgar de Chilling! Sir Edgar de Chilling!" reiterated the guests; and nothing but rejoicing and confusion reigned around.

Sir Edgar raised his arm to command silence, and there was that in his rigid face which hushed the clamour instantaneously. "I have come home, as you see," he spoke, "alive and well. Of my deserts and my honours I can leave others to speak—they are widely known. And I have come home to claim my wife."

"If you mean the late Lady Ellana de Chilling," spoke the baroness-mother, beside herself with passion, "you are too late; and your bold speech, Sir Edgar, becomes you not. My daughter is the Baroness of Chillingwater."

"Your daughter, madam," he answered, calm with concentrated indignation, "is the Lady Ellana de Chilling, and my wife."

"Peace, peace, boy!" reproved the lady-mother, contemptuously; "your brain is hot with folly. Ere you went to the wars, you may have induced my child to exchange love-vows with you—inexperienced as she was! But how dare you presume to insult the Baroness of Chillingwater by calling her your WIFE?"

"And how dare you presume to deny my right?" retorted Sir Edgar, his fiery indignation mastering him. "You are the first that ever doubted the word of a De Chilling. Your daughter, madam, became my wife in the sight of God, kneeling in His presence, at His holy altar; and my wife she is, so long as we both shall live. Stand forth, wretched woman," he continued, drawing the young baroness into the circle—"stand forth, guilty bride of two husbands, and own, before high Heaven, whose wife you really are!"

With a half scream, half moan of pain, the Lady Ellana, the instant she was released, darted from the hall. She might have been seen speeding along the terraces outside, like one possessed, her dark hair flowing behind her. Her face, in its shame, was never raised from its cowering position, and the dreadful words, that had made public her sin, rang in her ears, "guilty wife of two husbands!" *And they brothers!* She could never more hold up that once proud face, never more hold it up again, on earth.

The commotion that ensued indoors was terrific. A fierce quarrel took place between the baron and his brother ; the lady-mother playing her part in it, and loading Sir Edgar with sundry opprobrious epithets. The guests espoused the cause, some on one side, some on the other, as it was common for guests in those fierce periods to do ; and, altogether, it was a considerable time before the Lady Ellana was sought for. They searched in her own apartments, as Baroness of Chillingwater ; they searched in those formerly occupied by her ; finally, they searched the castle from turret to basement ; and they could not find her. But when they came to visit the grounds, and to look into the Holy Well, there lay the ill-fated Lady Ellana, her drowned body contrasting horribly with her rich white garments and sparkling jewels, and her unhappy soul winging its shadowy flight to Purgatory—so, at least, holy men asserted.

And never, from that hour, was the spot again called the Holy Well—how can that be holy whose waters have been polluted ? But, in time, it acquired the name of the “Lady’s Well,” and, as such, is it known unto the present day.

Wretchedness fell upon the Castle of Chillingwater. A reconciliation was effected between the brothers, but the baron retired at once into the neighbouring monastery, devoting his young years to the ascetic duties of a monk ; and Sir Edgar de Chilling returned to the holy wars, and lost his life in Palestine. The lady-mother, whose haughty pride nothing could subdue, remained in the castle, exercising her imperious sway there until her death. It was then left uninhabited, to go to rack and ruin, and during the civil war, in the time of the first Edward, it was razed to the ground.



THE KNELL.

THE wind went whistling up in the tower,
 Whistling went he and crying ;
 It lacked not long of the midnight hour,
 When the bells they heard him sighing.
 "Dost sigh for the morn and the gladsome day ?"
 But the wandering wind he answered, "Nay,
 I sigh for the year that's dying."

Then spake the bell with the sorrowful tongue :
 "Brothers ! the first to hail him,
 Ye rang for joy when the year was young ;
 And now that his strength doth fail him,
 'Tis mine to utter his dirge," quoth he :
 "Yours to welcome him gleefully,
 Mine to lament and bewail him."

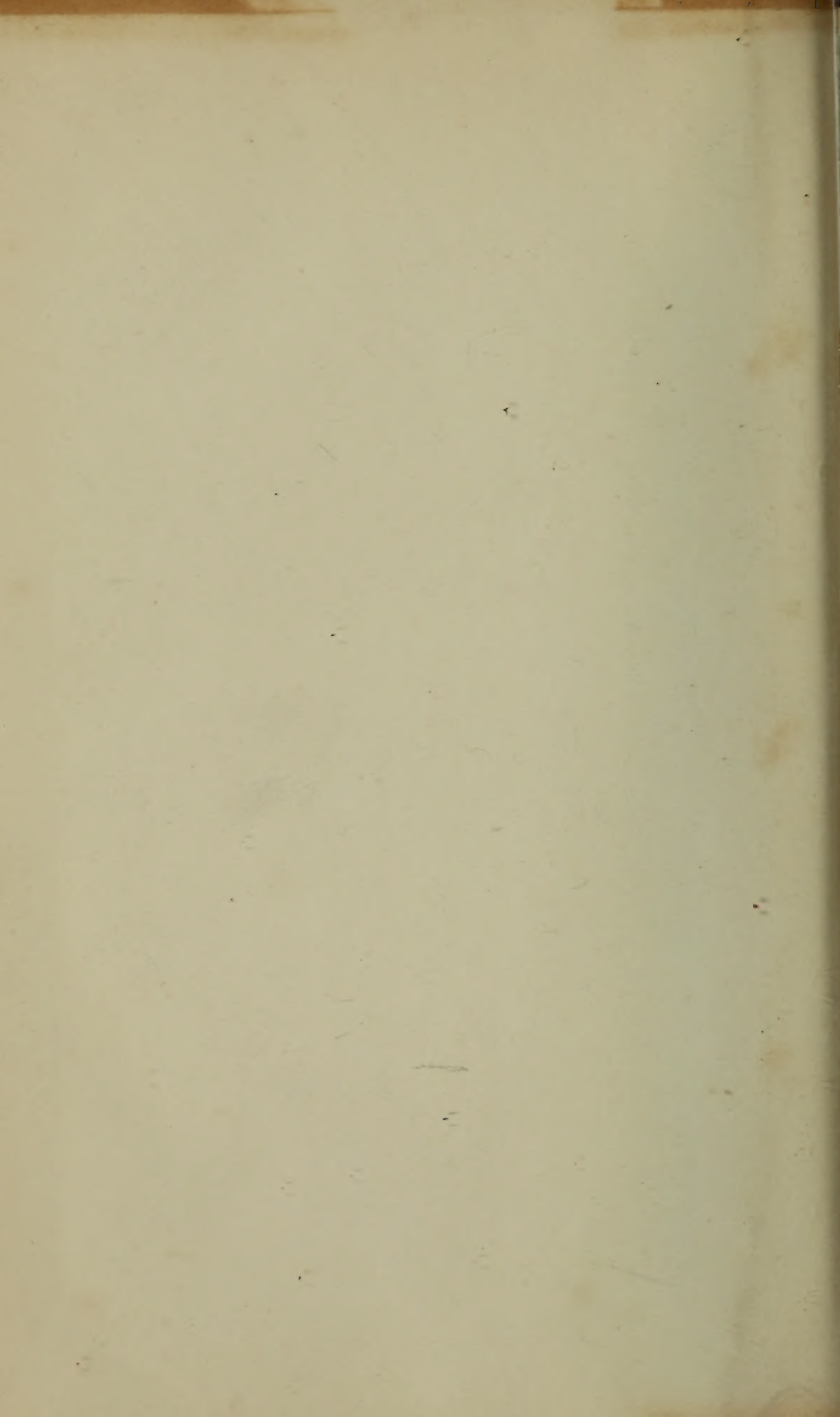
Solemnly, slowly, the voice of the bell
 Issued a note of warning ;
 Some grieved when they heard the good year's knell,
 Some listened, the token scorning.
 Said the young, "It is time he went his way ;"
 Said the old, "Why, he came but yesterday,
 And now he will die ere morning."

And die he did, in the dead of night,
 When lonely vigil keeping ;
 Few were the friends to mark his flight,
 And half the world lay sleeping.
 He went to his rest, for his task was done :
 And laughter and joy he had brought to one ;
 To many the sound of weeping.

He brought success and he brought despair,
 Prosperity and disaster ;
 At his touch the form of the maid grew fair,
 And the pulse of the youth beat faster.
 And on every soul and on every face
 He left some mark of his hand, some trace,
 Some message from Time, his master.

He laid full soon on a funeral pyre
 Bright hopes to him confided ;
 He gave to another his heart's desire,
 And the loved from the loving divided.
 We meant he should do great things, I ween :
 His knell but told us what might have been,
 As into the past he glided.

SYDNEY GREY.



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The Argosy

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